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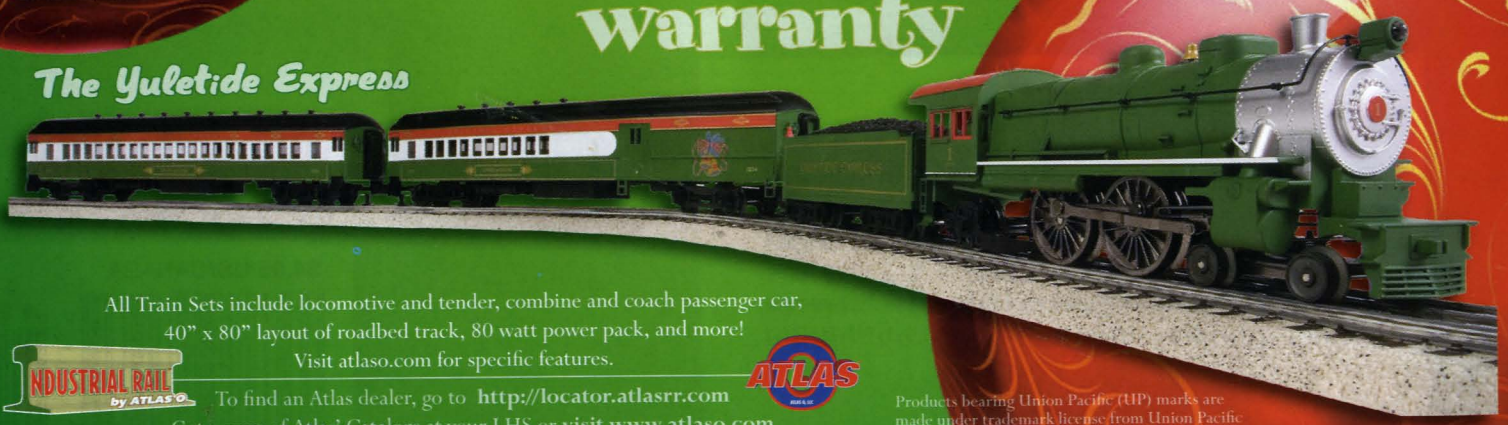

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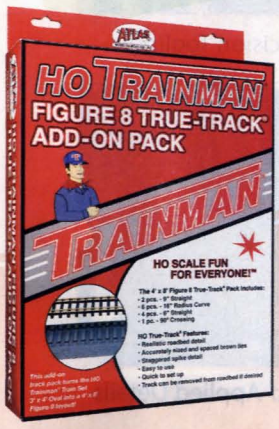

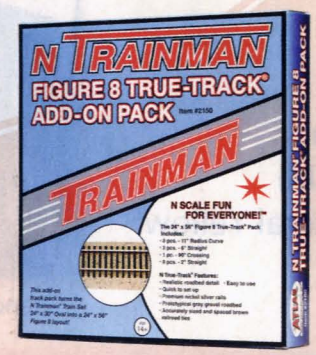

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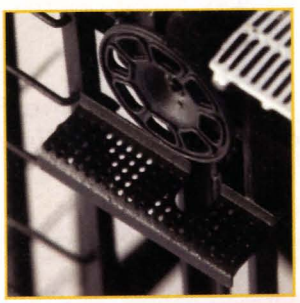

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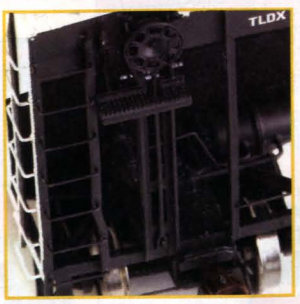

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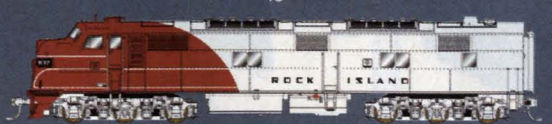

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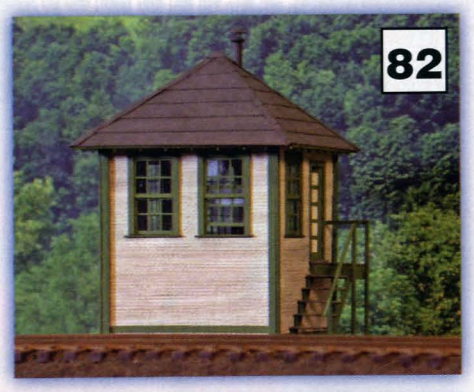
The Train List



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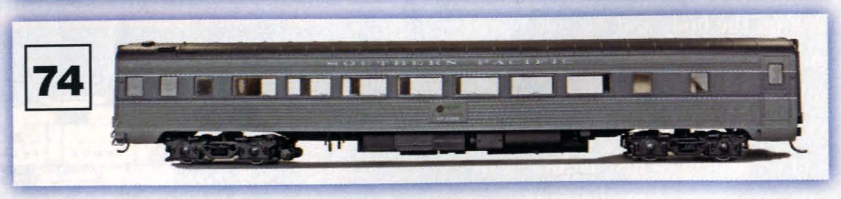

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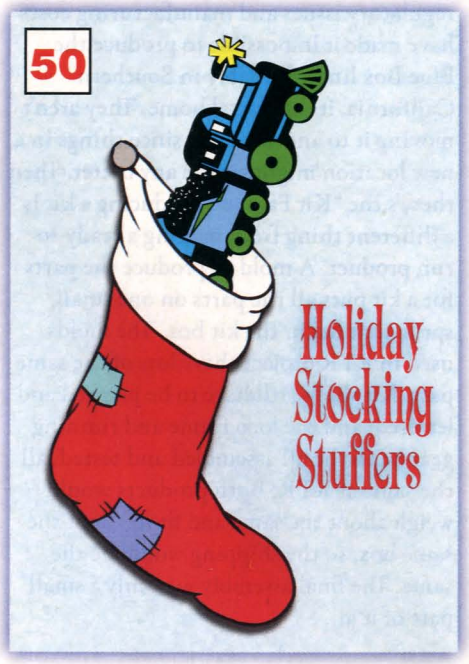

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About The Cover: *Young Billy and Taylor instantly fell in love with their Disney World Resort Train Set. Discover the magic yourself on page 32. — Photo by Mike Lindsay.*

Editorial

Athearn pulls plug on Blue Box line

On October 19, I received this announcement:

Effective immediately, we here at Athearn have made the difficult decision to discontinue the production of our Blue Box line of kits. There were several factors that contributed to this extremely challenging decision; however, the primary factor revolved around affordability and ensuring that our Blue Box kit pricing remain aligned with what the market can bear. Unfortunately, due to increased manufacturing and labor costs, it has been determined that we are no longer able to continue offering kits at competitive price points as compared to already assembled products.

For over 50 years the Athearn Blue Box kits have been sold worldwide, bringing happiness, joy, and excitement to thousands of model railroad enthusiasts. Your passion for these products has allowed us to thrive and grow into the industry leader you still support today, and for that we are eternally grateful. Moving forward this will allow us to dedicate more resources to new and exciting projects in our Ready To Roll, Genesis, and Roundhouse lines for another 50 years, or more.

We will continue to support all service and warranty needs on Blue Box kits from our headquarters in Long Beach, California.

The folks around this industry have been aware over the past several decades that the hobby is drifting ever more from kit-building to ready-to-use. It's about your spare time and how you wish to use it. When I was a kid, model railroaders were mostly drawn from the ranks of railroaders and craftsmen such as machinists. They would fabricate a steam model from sheets of brass, soldering them together. They machined all the small parts, having most of the small tools of a machine shop. The lazy ones broke down and bought premade wheels. In those days, cars kits didn't come with trucks, wheel-sets, or couplers.

Between a market that was long on raw materials and short on built-up models, a model railroader had no choice but to build kits. Some of the kits were very difficult to build and took a lot of tinkering to make them run well. And despite being in kit form, many of the kits were both expensive and incomplete. It was a costly and demanding hobby, requiring a lot of work (time) before you ever ran a train.

Irv Athearn's Blue Box line revolutionized the business. He included trucks, wheel sets, and couplers. His specialty was creating a worthwhile model that was easy to assemble and reliable to run. You would sit down with his shaker box, and you didn't have to buy anything else. Then, you could probably finish the job in an hour or less.

Irv was a great businessman because he made products that sold well. He understood the market and discovered that making models easier to build and at a good price point would encourage a lot of repeat business. He also encouraged a new breed of model railroaders, folks who didn't work in a machine shop. I don't know if there is a way to count how many Athearn cars and locos are running around layouts today, but tens of millions wouldn't be an overestimation.

However, most industry observers agree that the Blue Box line was on increasingly shaky ground even before the introduction of Athearn's Ready-To-Roll line. RTR took the Blue Box model and assembled it for you. It was a natural service to offer, and we had the choice of kit and RTR. As time went along, the folks at Athearn improved the paint, the handrails, the detail, and the general quality of the model.

A downward spiral in the kit world of model railroading was changing the hobby. It wasn't just RTR cars and locos; there were also several makers of pre-roadbedded track, built-up structures, ready-to-plant trees and bushes. You can still buy flex track or, if you really want to, handlay your own track. If that's how you want to spend your time.

What I found out from Athearn was that the decision to shut down the Blue Box line was agonizing. Everyone who worked for them had an opinion, and these were scattered all over the spectrum. Looking back, the decision to offer Ready-To-Roll had been difficult, as well. Athearn has always had real model railroaders working for them, and they had their say.

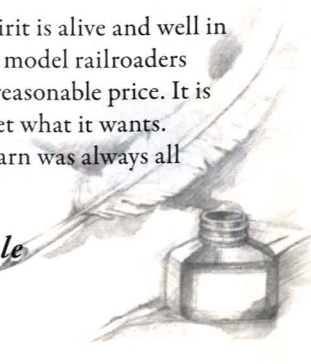
In the end of it, those who have watched the industry agree: Athearn might not have survived without the RTR line. Along with that came the reality that producing the Blue Box line in China would wind up with a kit that was only two or three dollars cheaper than the RTR version. Imagine a Ready-To-Roll model selling at your dealer for $80.00 and the Blue Box of the same thing sitting next to it for $77.

Why? Economics. The convergence of regulatory issues and manufacturing costs have made it impossible to produce the Blue Box line affordably in Southern California, its ancestral home. They aren't moving it to another state since things in a new location might not be any better. Then there's the "Kit Factor." Producing a kit is a different thing from making a ready-to-run product. A mold to produce the parts for a kit puts all the parts on one small sprue that fits in the kit box. The molds used in RTR projects have lots of the same part. Kit shells still have to be painted and lettered, and the loco frame and running gear has to be all assembled and tested, all the same as RTR. Both products would weigh about the same and fit in about the same box, so the shipping would be the same. The final assembly was only a small part of it all.

At the end of the day, there just was no point in going on. Who was going to buy a new Blue Box kit when for two or three dollars more they could get it all built and ready to go? With about a million unsold Blue Box kits on dealers' shelves and double that many touring the train show circuit, there will be these kits around for years.

Bottom line? Irv's spirit is alive and well in the RTR line, giving model railroaders good products for a reasonable price. It is also giving the market what it wants. That's what Irv Athearn was always all about.

— By John Sipple



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Fresh From The RPO Car

Modern-era modeler finds creative use for American Limited Semaphores

I also admired the American Limited semaphores from the first released picture of the model, but I am a contemporary modeler depicting the railroads of today. Indeed, I am now replacing many older signals with new BLMA versions just as the real railroads are modernizing. So what was I to do?

My solution was to place two signals on either side of my main yard office entrance as decorations and a tribute to the past. Turned out to be quite effective. Photo is attached.

Roger Thomas
West Windsor, NJ

Here's Roger's photo. The setup looks pretty nice and uses the American Limited Signals to good effect.

Batteries not included

The Aug. Cover Story was real exciting. There are very few articles that hold my attention. It was very informative and on other issues it got me to thinking. I'm very disappointed with DCC performance on the track (dead spots). I had a Lionel train for many years and I would run it all day and never stop. Half of my time is cleaning the track with DCC. So why couldn't capacitors be added to my locos? Even if I had to add a boxcar that would be worth it. Also why couldn't we even have a battery that ran the loco? Boy that would solve the track issue. It would be like having a hybrid track charge the battery and battery running the loco. Also if Aristo-Craft came out with one for HO would it work with our existing DCC/ DC locos?

Clayton Ranney
Via E-mail

Hi Clayton,

I'm glad you enjoyed the article on Aristo-Craft's Revolution system. Lewis Polk devoted a large part of two years to the design of this. It interlocks with his battery/RC efforts and the bus-control in his locomotives. However, be sure you understand that it is not, in any way, DCC. It is pure DC instead of being the modified AC used by DCC. Commands from the Revolution to locomotives are sent via 2.4gHz radio signals, not in the tracks, as happens with DCC.

In DCC, the use of capacitors and/or batteries to provide a second or more of run-time when the loco hits a dead spot is very unlikely, at least as a common item. To add capacitors to a DCC decoder would require some thought along with integration within the circuit. The caps would tend to not only require rectification of the input signal, it would possibly mangle that signal in the process. Soundtraxx offers the option of adding a cap to their DSX product in order to make the sound more steady, but I doubt it would help much with motor operation. Lenz does offer cap continuity circuitry as a rather pricy option for some decoders. However, if the connection between the command station and the decoder is passing through the rails, there is no way to get communications through a dead zone.

Aristo-Craft is working on an HO version but is having to cope with the miniaturization of all the circuitry. When it is complete, it would be possible to run from smaller batteries with radio control, and one could operate a battery/RC train on the same tracks as DCC is using, but the two wouldn't have integrated control. It would be two different processes with two different controllers.

I am currently (pun intended) working with the Revolution along with Aristo's Lithium Ion batteries and a Dallee sound system using a "trail car." So far, everything works fine and is very easy to set up. It is still an ongoing process, however, and may be a couple of months from publication. Stay tuned as I examine battery power in the garden! – John

More on Athearn's UP Turbine

Your October issue arrived today. I read your review of the Athearn UP Turbine locomotive model immediately and have four comments:

1. Reference is made to the model of Number 58 (with tender) mimicking the appearance of the actual locomotive "between 1956 and her retirement on June 30, 1964." This is not strictly correct: In addition to other minor changes in appearance that the average modeler might not even notice or be concerned about, most (all?) of the UP turbines received large, red "UNION PACIFIC" lettering across their nose beginning about 1959, according to the extensive body of published photographic evidence. This is not reflected on any of the models released or announced so far by Athearn. In response to inquiry, Athearn has hinted that a round of late-life-appearance (my term, not theirs) turbine models may be in the offing later on. The forthcoming Veranda turbine models will not have this decoration, either. Given that Union Pacific and "undecorated" are the only logical roadname variants for these models, this is a logical strategy on Athearn's part.

2. Your review overlooked what I consider to be one of the most glaring detailing errors — inadvertent installation of what appears to be a re-railing frog detail part on the fourth (rear-most) truck instead of on the third rear truck where all photos I have ever seen of these units show this hardware to be located. This may have been an assembly mistake. Modelers skilled in minor mechanical tinkering can correct this by swapping those two pairs of truck sideframes.

3. Arrgh!! Please don't encourage a man-

ufacturer to include traction tires on any model locomotive — certainly not HO or larger. In my personal opinion, traction tires are a maintenance headache as they either deteriorate in the atmosphere or wear out. I would *never* buy a locomotive with traction tires if I planned to operate it. Modelers who want more oomph might consider running their turbine model with appropriate diesel models as you allude to in your review. Mine is paired with an older Life-Like Proto UP GP-9. They run well together and the visual effect is excellent.

4. Finally, although your review alludes to another release of turbine loco models by Athearn for "June 2010," as we now know these will be models of the so-called "Veranda" turbine. So far, I find no evidence on the Athearn website that a re-run of the so-called "Standard turbine" models has been announced. However, I do note that the original offering is already all but sold out.

Regards,

Greg Nazarow
Randolph, VT

Dear Mr. Nazarow,

Thanks for your additional observations regarding the Athearn Gas Turbine review. First of all, you got me on your first comment. I completely missed the boat on the addition of the red "UNION PACIFIC" appearing on the nose of these Turbines around 1960. On the second point though, I don't believe the misplaced rerailing frogs would constitute a "glaring" error; the missing details I did mention in my review were of a more serious nature. After all, the rerailing frogs were just tools used by the crews and not actual appliances that were applied to the locomotive in error. While some photos indicate that crews made it a practice of hanging frogs on the third truck's sideframes on this series Turbine, some units don't appear to have them at all, while the Veranda Turbines (Athearn's next release, which no doubt will use this same chassis) appear to have them placed on either the third or fourth truck's sideframes. And like you said, if a modeler is bothered by their appearance, they can switch the sideframes around.

As far as traction tires go, that's a personal preference and I would never forgo purchasing a model based on that criteria alone. Besides, most manufacturers these days that do utilize traction tires on their HO-scale locomotives usually also provide alternate sets of drive wheels without traction tires.

Finally, I was not aware of Athearn's upcoming release of the Veranda Turbine when I wrote this review so it was the editor who choose to include this information, as noted. However, I don't believe he was referring to a second run of the 51-60 series Turbine, just the announcement of the Veranda Turbine. – David Otte

A DCC Chasm?

I think DCC control systems are a wonderful innovation that adds to the realism of scale operation. It does, however, drive up the cost of model railroading for all modelers, including those who do not choose to use DCC on their layouts. I live in Eddystone, Pennsylvania, where all Baldwin diesels were born and was delighted to read in the October issue that a model of the Baldwin Centipede had been introduced. Unfortunately, the price is staggering. Let's get our heads out of the clouds and set our feet firmly on the ground. This is an injection-molded plastic diesel locomotive manufactured in a third-world country, perhaps assembled by prison labor, and it is priced at $249.99 for a single cab unit.

Certainly, not all of this hefty price is due to the inclusion of DCC, but it would be nice to have the option of a non-DCC version. Few new models are offered in non-DCC versions. The argument will doubtless be made that it would be more expensive to offer two versions of the loco than to offer a single version. That's all well and good, but we non-DCC people still end up paying a premium for what are to us useless electronic gadgets. The truth is that you can market a model locomotive at a premium price if it has DCC capability, but if you simply delete the cost of the DCC components in the loco, the price would only drop by a couple of dollars.

The DCC systems in these locomotives have been a great boon to the modeling manufacturers. I've worked in electronics manufacturing for years, and these systems literally cost pennies to add to the model locomotive, yet the capability drives up prices tremendously. Don't talk to me about research and development costs. With today's technology, these are simple devices that are now being applied to model trains simply because the components have reached a certain level of miniaturization.

I'm all in favor of realistic operations, but many modelers simply cannot afford to upgrade their systems and multiple older locomotives to DCC. Please don't quote me prices on how "affordable" DCC systems are at only a few hundred dollars. These systems are only affordable to individuals who have enough money to buy them. If you are a modeler on a modest income struggling to send children through college, heat the house, and pay outrageous medical insurance premiums, a few hundred dollars is not affordable.

In the end, DCC will do more to split this hobby between the "haves" and the "have-nots" than any other trend in model railroading ever has until now. In the past, those with less to spend simply bought plastic instead of brass, upgraded less expensive models to be more realistic by adding details by hand, or simply stuck to diesels instead of steam. But we all operated the same way using quaint but effective block wiring that costs next to nothing to install. When you bought a model railroading magazine, there were few articles that couldn't be applied to your modeling in one way or another. Now, when my issue of *Model Railroad News* arrives, half of the articles seem to be concerned with testing, evaluating, or designing DCC systems. I know your editorial staff is big on DCC, but I don't think you truly appreciate how heavily into it you really are.

I'm not telling you how to run your magazine or what demographic group to target, but I think it would be appropriate to note that the introduction of DCC is doing more to the model railroading hobby than simply provide more realistic operation. Your editorial position seems to be that DCC is a win-win proposition for everyone in the hobby, but I think there really is a down side, as well.

Glen Wilson
Eddystone, PA

Hi Glen,

First off, though I don't want to get involved in discussions of international politics, I can assure you prison labor isn't being used to manufacture model railroad products. In reality, the factories of which I am aware employ skilled workers, usually women, and

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pay wages that, while low by American standards, are high enough to attract people from hundreds of miles away. And China is no longer a third-world producer; costs in China have risen so rapidly over the past couple of years that some companies are looking to other countries, like Vietnam, for production.

The BLI Centipede comes with a proprietary sound system and an integral DCC controller. I have operated and reviewed BLI locomotives before and have to say they deliver good value. But, you are correct; there is a price and even locomotives that are just DCC-ready have added costs. But then so do a lot of features we now take almost for granted, like constant lighting, can motors, and flywheels.

I do have sympathy for your viewpoint: as I noted in my October editorial, I am trying to make my own decision about DCC. Like you, I have a daughter in college and annual health insurance premiums that are more than my parents paid for their first house. Living in southeast Texas, I pay the same price as everyone else. Whether I go with DCC or just pick up another MRC power pack is a value judgment I will have to make, balancing the advantages of DCC against other things I could do with the money.

To be honest, there has been a chasm between command control and regular DC operation for more than 20 years. Perhaps you remember Dynatrol? Or the prices of early Lenz systems? The "haves" who could afford them enjoyed a level of operation the rest of us could not; I don't recall anyone losing much sleep over it. We just had fun operating on those layouts when we had an opportunity. I've run trains on Gil Freitag's Stony Creek & Western and Doz Bozman's Great Great Northern and it was a lot of fun. But I've also enjoyed running trains on layouts where multiple train operation meant lots of DPDT switches. Over the past decade, DCC has become more affordable, meaning more model railroaders have switched and manufacturers have adapted to the change. But there are still many, many model railroaders who still enjoy running their trains with block controls and a throttle. There are plenty of locomotives for them, as well.

Perhaps we should review more of these. We are set up to test both DCC and DC locomotives and are perfectly willing to review either kind. In fact, most of our locomotive reviews cover both DC and DCC operation so that the user of either medium will benefit from our evaluation. Our job at Model Railroad News *is not to evaluate the price of the new products we receive; our job is to report on them and let you know how they stack up in adherence to the prototype, conform to standards, and how well they run. If we can be good at that, we're happy. – Bill*

Atlas MOW in N

I have had my Atlas MOW car since May. I have seen differences from your HO model to my N scale one. First of all: Do not try to remove the front hood. It is glued on. There is no plug in there for a decoder on the N-scale version. I found the switch not very effective. The track brush is a stick-on. To propel it, get the heaviest loco with the most drive wheels. Ten volts is where the loco can handle it. At this voltage the motor is spinning fast. The vacuum sucks up spiders, pill bugs, lint, loose ballast, and most anything else on the right of way.

My main is almost four miles long. I had to stop and clean out the fan and dustbin five times the first trip. One cloth pad wore out in one trip using "Goo Gone" for fluid. It ran out of the little tank in about three feet of track. I think the cloth pad would do okay without spinning; I'm going to try the water, soap, and alcohol. This is the trick for hard-to-get-to track. If track is easy to get to, a bright boy is more fiddle-free, but vacuuming the whole layout is worth it. I was having contact trouble with power diverting switches until I ran the MOW car. The track brush must have cleaned them.The Atlas N-scale MOW car works great,

The new HO Scale LRC.
You need two.
VIA
6921
6921
RAPIDO TRAINS INC.
www.rapidotrains.com
Pre-production sample shown. Lots of stuff being improved for production. Visit our web site for more info.

but I recommend using two strong locos that work well together. The little stick-on brush has a lot of drag.

Keep up the good work. You are doing a fine job.

Lee Martin
Newport, KY

Thanks Lee,

We weren't offered an N-scale version, so I could only report on the HO model. I'm glad you had a positive experience and even more happy that you shared your experiences with us. Quite obviously, the HO and N track cleaners are different in many ways and you've alerted us to them. Thank you. – John

More Flying Springs

I am responding to the letter Bill Jones wrote to THE RPO in the Oct. issue on SHS (S Helper Service) "flying" springs.

I see from the picture that he is an AF Hi-Railer from his layout.

I have been in S scale, not Hi-Rail, for 15 years. I know and am friends with Don and Robin Thompson, owners of SHS. I have run their equipment on their trucks for years and know of no "flying springs" issues. And instead of buying new trucks, at "more expense," why not contact Don and Robin and talk to them. I am sure they will send new springs to replace old ones if they don't ask to have your trucks sent to them and send you new trucks.

Don and Robin bend over backwards to make their product a good experience for their customers. That cannot be said for some of the other manufacturers in S. So before you bash SHS, see what they will do about "your" flying spring problem.

Terry Harrison
Hendersonville, NC

O-scale Smokestacks?

Hello, I'm looking for two factory smokestacks in O scale to add to my layout. So far, I've had ZERO luck in locating either custom-made or existing kits. Can you be of any help, please?

Thanking you in advance,

Dick Proctor
Greene, ME

Dick,

I can't recall ever seeing a brick smokestack specifically for O scale. Walthers makes an HO-scale brick stack that is about 10 inches tall, but that is it. Lionel produced the scale size and functioning "Industrial Smokestack" No. 6 -14142 a couple of years ago, although it was a concrete design, I believe. You might check on eBay to see if you can find one. And it's possible one of our readers may know of something I've missed. – David Otte

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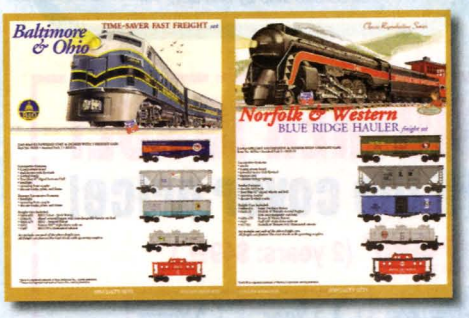
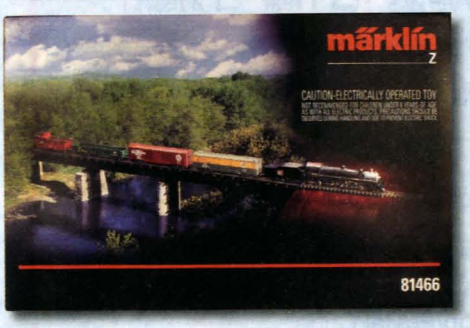
Holiday

The Most Wonderful Time of the Year...





CHRISTMAS TIME IS TRAIN TIME. *I know that for a fact. Twenty years ago this month, my wife gave me a train set. It wasn't a typical train set; it included a set of Atlas HO Snap-Track, an Athearn F7, some Athearn Blue Box rolling stock, and a MRC power pack. That gift was the beginning of my first layout and two decades of enjoying the greatest hobby on earth.*

That's why one of my favorite traditions at **Model Railroad News** *is our annual Holiday Showcase. Beginning in late summer, we start checking out the new train sets and looking over the new products to come up with suggestions for the model railroader on your list. In case you're the model railroader on someone else's list, feel free to leave this issue, opened to the appropriate page, where that someone can see it.*

We're covering six train sets this year. Three are geared toward future model railroaders: the Disney World Resort Train comes with four figures that can ride the train as it chuffs, toots, and dings its way around the track, and the large scale Thomas and Percy train sets from Bachmann can be expanded to create a railroad as big as all outdoors. The O-gauge "Golden Memories" sets from Williams by Bachmann and the Märklin Deluxe American Starter Set in Z are for adult model railroad fans. They're wonderful for reawakening old memories and making new ones.

Incidentally, if a train set is part of your holiday gift plans, open it early so it can be enjoyed through the holidays. We say that every year, but a good idea bears repeating.

Our Writer's Picks are smaller gifts of special interest selected by our editors and reviewers. They run the gamut from N to large scale and include structures, figures, vehicles, and tools. News Editor Jennifer Lindsay and her staff have scoured the latest new products to assemble a group of Stocking Stuffers that will brighten any model railroader's holiday. We've made sure to include inexpensive items suitable for a younger person's shopping list.

We've offered a variety of suggestions; however, a trip to your local hobby shop or a visit to an online retailer will provide even more ideas.

From everyone at **Model Railroad News**, *best wishes to all for a wonderful, train-filled, holiday season.*

- Bill Cawthon

Showcase

Z scale

Some of the best small things come in big packages

märklin
Z
CAUTION-ELECTRICALLY OPERATED TOY
NOT RECOMMENDED FOR CHILDREN UNDER 8 YEARS OF AGE. AS WITH ALL ELECTRIC PRODUCTS, PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE OBSERVED DURING HANDLING AND USE TO PREVENT ELECTRIC SHOCK.
81466

Review and Photos by Bill Cawthon

Deluxe American Starter Set, Walthers No. 441-81466, MSRP: $589.99

Märklin, Inc.
P.O. Box 510559
New Berlin, WI 53151
262-522-7080 • Fax: 262 -522-7288
www.marklin.com

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One of the major factors that draws me to Z scale is Märklin Mini-Club, specifically the Märklin steam engines. As I have said before, watching a Märklin Z-scale steam engine run is a lot like watching a classic Swiss watch operate.

For the 2009 holiday season, I had the opportunity to get acquainted with Märklin's Deluxe American Starter Set. The set includes a 2-8-2 Heavy Mikado decorated for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, one of the predecessor lines of the modern-day Burlington Northern Santa Fe, a Great Northern boxcar, a Seaboard Air Line boxcar, a Chicago & Northwestern gondola, a CB&Q offset cupola caboose, 12 sections of straight track, 12 sections of curved track, two electric turnouts, a rerailer, power pack/throttle, distribution strip, wire, plugs, sockets, and three solid cast-resin structures, along with instructions and a track plan brochure. In short, you get everything you need, except for a small, flat-blade screwdriver, for a four-foot by two-foot layout with a passing track.

The CB&Q got its first deliveries of Mikados in 1910 when Baldwin delivered 60 of them, number 5300 to 5359, to replace the 2-6-2 Prairies that were struggling to keep up with the increasing weight of trains in the early Twentieth Century. Engine 5509 was one of only 15 Heavy Mikados assigned to the Burlington Route by the U.S. Railroad Administration. Designated Class O-4, the locomotives were built by Baldwin in 1919 as part of a series numbered 5500 – 5514.

Overall, No. 5509 stretched 80 feet, 9 inches long and weighed 299,810 pounds. Like all of the CB&Q Mikados, 5509 had eight 64-inch drivers. With its tender loaded with 15,000 gallons of water and 19 tons of coal, the total weight soared to 502,780 pounds. Its larger grate and higher boiler pressure allowed it to supply 52,300 pounds of tractive effort, nearly 3,000 pound more than the CB&Q's first Mikados.

The CB&Q was big on steam and continued running mainline steam until 1959. The Mikados served well into the 1950s, and some were still do-

ing switching duty in the early 1960s. Some of the lighter Mikados are still around but, best I can tell, all of the Heavy Mikes ended their days in the scrap yard.

The Marklin Set

Märklin set 81466 comes packed in a Styrofoam tray with a light cardboard cover and a rigid clear plastic cover for storage. Each component is nestled in its place in the tray. One of the things I like about Märklin is how complete their sets are. There's no need to wait until the shops reopen because something you need is missing. There's even a rerailer for those of us whose eyesight and dexterity have seen better days. Just let the car roll down the rerailer and it will land on the track with its wheels on the rails. As I mentioned earlier, the only thing that's not included is a small, flat-blade screwdriver to attach the supplied plugs to the supplied wiring for the pre-wired turnouts. This is a gift one can open Christmas morning and be running a train before the big dinner. It should be noted that the Märklin train is not designed to run on carpet. You will get fibers in the works and you will be unhappy if you do.

The star of the set is this miniature replica of Chicago, Burlington & Quincy USRA Heavy Mikado No. 5509. Note how the space between the boiler and drivers is open, just like on the prototype.

Two boxcars, a gondola, and a caboose complete the consist. The Burlington Route ran steam in mainline service until the 1950s.

Running is something this train does very well. After just a few minutes of running in with the supplied Märklin power pack, the little train would rocket down the track at speeds in excess of 230 scale miles per hour (smph), far beyond the top speed ever recorded by a real heavy Mike (or any other steam locomotive, for that matter) or crawl at a scale 13.6 smph allowing you to see the coupling and connecting rods in motion. As the locomotive gets run in, I would expect the minimum speed to drop even farther.

Pictorial instructions show you how to hook everything up, so even a complete novice will have no trouble. The basic loop is about 42 inches by 16 inches if you use all of the track that comes with the set and have the passing track on the interior, so a kitchen table or desk will suffice until a more permanent home can be arranged. You could set it up on a coffee table but unless your holidays are infant- and toddler-free, I wouldn't recommend it. In Z scale, everything is small parts and Märklin does not recommend the set for anyone under eight. I would set the bar even higher; this is a train set for an adult or a responsible teen who will enjoy it and care for it.

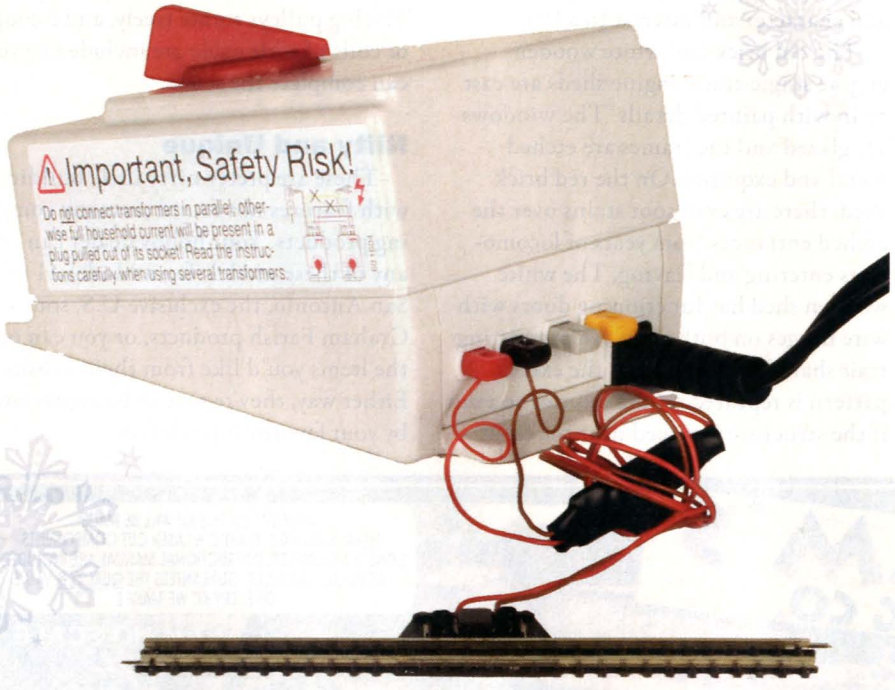
The locomotive itself is remarkable. Unlike some steam locomotives, even in larger scales, you can see underneath the boiler, just like on real steam engines. The 5-pole Mini-Club motor drives the drives the wheels through a gear train that runs behind the drivers. It's a most effective illusion. It's a decent replica of the full-size CB&Q Heavy Mikado, even to having the bell mounted in front of the smokestack. It's a bit longer than the prototype; from the tip of the pilot to the back of the tender, the Märklin Mike is right at 85 feet long, but the drivers are within a scale inch of the prototype.

The tooling and assembly are top-notch, which is what you'd expect from Märklin. This is a premium set and you

won't find the word "China" anywhere on the major components. Paint and printing are also first-rate.

Being Z scale, there aren't a whole lot of added details. The headlight, which operates when the locomotive is powered, regardless of the direction it's moving, is a nice touch and really adds to the experience. The end rails and ladders on the caboose are delicate etched metal. Yes, they are a bit oversized; a scale handrail would be an extremely fine wire that would never survive handling.

The Deluxe American Starter set includes everything shown here. All of the track, wiring, connectors you need to have trains running in short order is in the box. You need only supply a small, flat-bade screwdriver.


Important, Safety Risk!
Do not connect transformers in parallel, otherwise full household current will be present in a plug pulled out of its socket! Read the instructions carefully when using several transformers.

Getting power to the track is simple and tool-free. Just insert the pre-tinned wires from the pre-wired terminal track into the spring-loaded connectors on the power pack.)

One thing you will notice is the trucks on the various cars are set farther in than not only the prototype, but most other scale models, as well. The reason for this is to allow the rolling stock to work on tighter radius curves without excessive overhang. European freight cars are generally smaller than their American counterparts and Märklin track is available with a radius under six inches, so an accommodation had to be made.

The buildings, which include a train station, church, and what looks to be a farm house but could be any of a variety of structures, can be used right out of the box but will look better with a bit of acrylic paint. You can use hobby paints, but the craft acrylics at the big-box hobby and craft stores will work just as well. There are lots of other structures and other details like figures and vehicles that can be added, and Märklin offers expansion track sets so your railroad can grow. The same scenery techniques that work for larger scales will work for Z, as long as you use the finer materials. Just don't ever try to ballast the turnouts; they will jam.

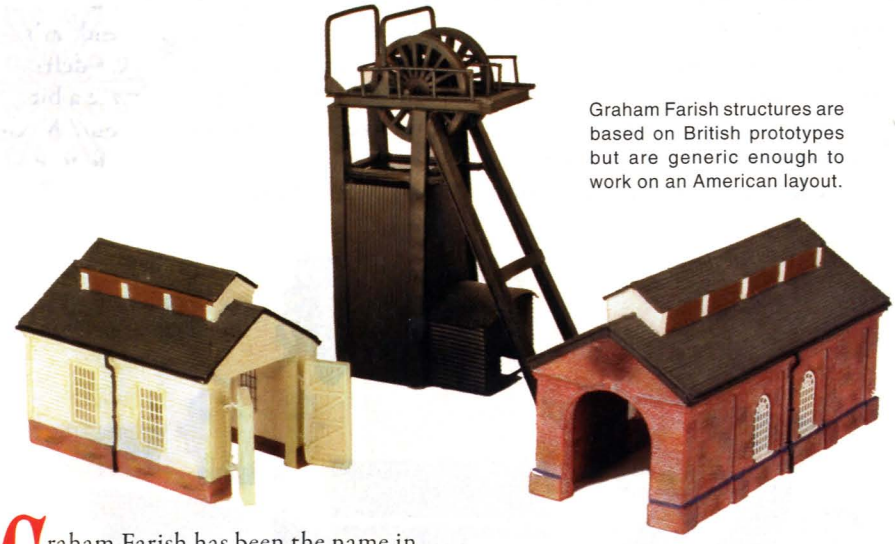
In Closing

This is just one of the starter sets available from Märklin Mini-Club and in stock at Walthers, Märklin's North American distributor. Each is a masterpiece of miniaturization and will be the source of years of enjoyment. A Märklin Z-scale train has been a part of our holidays for the past few years and my experience with the Deluxe American Starter set reminded me of the reason Z has been a strong contender to be the scale of choice for my own home layout. For that special person on your holiday gift list, the Märklin set would make a wonderful surprise. Better yet, give it as an early gift and set it up to enjoy through the holiday season!

The tiny train is ready to roll on a tabletop or desktop or become the beginning of your own model railroad empire.

Writer's Pick: N Scale Structures

Graham Farish structures are the perfect size for a holiday stocking



Graham Farish structures are based on British prototypes but are generic enough to work on an American layout.

By Bill Cawthon

Red Brick Single Road Engine Shed, Item 42-007, MSRP: $26.95
Single Road Small Wooden Engine Shed, Item 42-009, MSRP: $21.95
Hampton Heath Colliery Pit Head Lift, Item 42-025, MSRP: $26.49

Graham Farish
Bachmann Europe PLC
Moat Way, Barwell
Leicestershire LE9 8EY England
www.bachmann.co.uk

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Graham Farish has been the name in British N scale for years. Formed after World War II, the company was acquired by Kader Industries in 2001 and is now part of Bachmann's European operations.

In addition to locomotives and rolling stock, Graham Farish has a variety of interesting ready-to-use buildings that will add character and interest to a layout.

The red brick and white wooden engine single-track engine sheds are cast resin with painted details. The windows are glazed and the frames are etched metal and exquisite. On the red brick shed, there are even soot stains over the arched entrances from years of locomotives entering and leaving. The white wooden shed has functioning doors with wire hinges on both ends. An interesting trait shared by the sheds is the exterior pattern is repeated on the interior so even if the structure is placed near the front of the layout, it will stand up to close inspection.

If you're not familiar with the term, "Colliery" refers to a coal mine and the various structures that support it. Freely translated into American, the structure is a coal minehead lift. Unlike the engine sheds, the lift is made of thin sheet metal. The big pulleys rotate freely, and a couple of coils of scale cable are included so you can complete the scene.

Nifty and Unique

These are pretty nifty little buildings with features not found on many competing products. Your hobby dealer can order any of these models from Models11 of San Antonio, the exclusive U.S. source for Graham Farish products, or you can order the items you'd like from their website. Either way, they're sure to be appreciated by your favorite N-scale fan.

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Writer's Pick: Large Scale Figures

Bachmann G-Rails Engineers are ready to work on your large-scale layout

By Bill Cawthon

Civil Engineers A, Item 22-171, MSRP: $11.49
Civil Engineers B, Item 22-172, MSRP: $11.49

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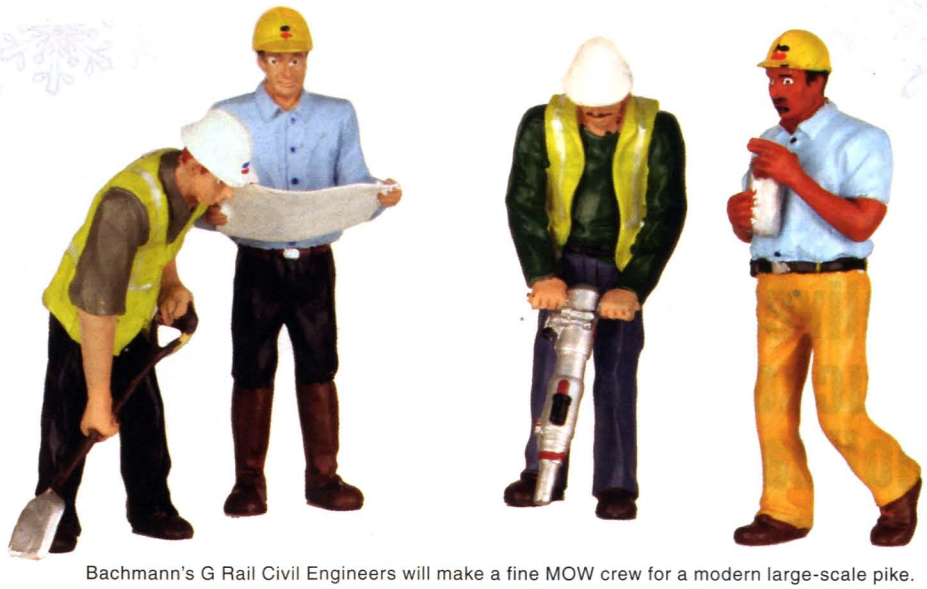


Bachmann's G Rail Civil Engineers will make a fine MOW crew for a modern large-scale pike.

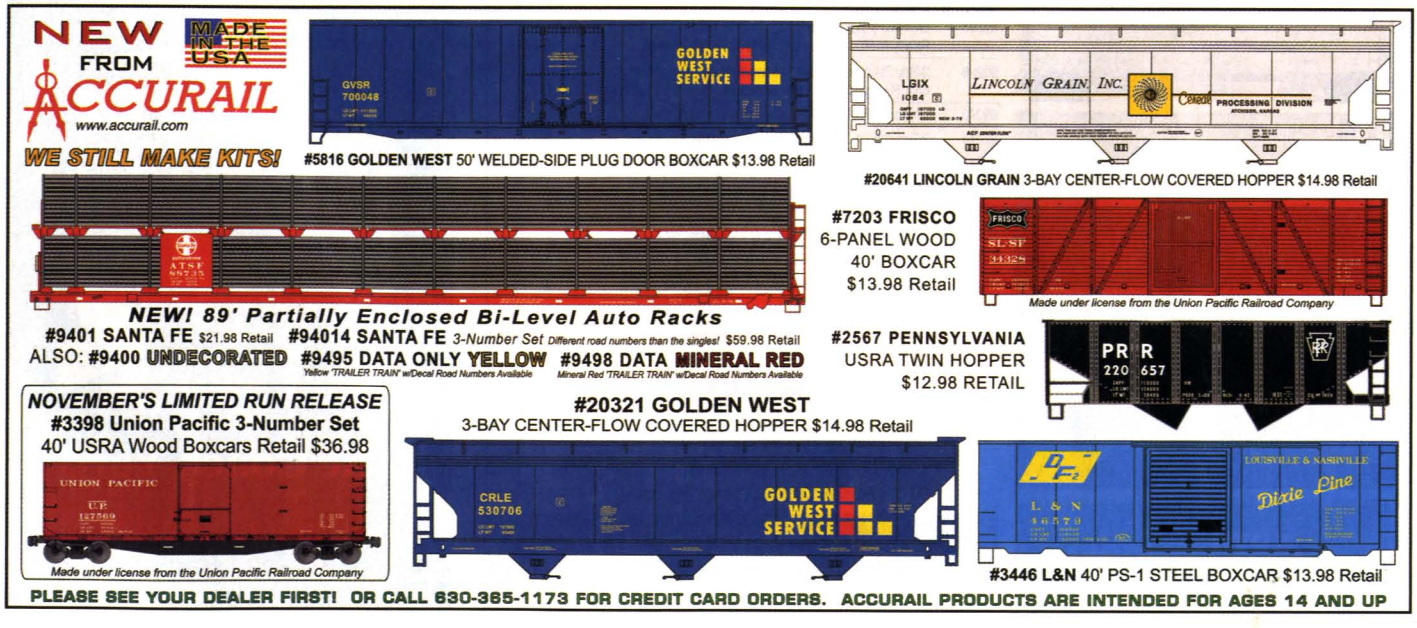
Scenecraft by Bachmann is an umbrella brand for a variety of scenic accessories, including figures to go with each of their primary British scales. Bachmann G-Rail-compatible figures, which are just now appearing in the U.S., are pre-painted and ready-to-use. The two sets shown here are based on British workers but they are generic enough to be at home in the Colonies, too.

Set A includes the worker with the shovel and the chap checking the plans. Set B contains the jackhammer operator and a fellow with what looks to be a thermos.

The figures are well molded and the proportions are right — quite impressive for moderately priced figures. If you don't need engineers, Scenecraft has a number of other sets from which to choose. Two figures are included in each set and they are within the budget of even young shoppers trying to find a nice gift for Dad.

More To Choose from Online

Models11 of San Antonio is the exclusive source for Bachmann Branchline and Scenecraft in America and their online catalog shows literally hundreds of products from locomotives and train sets to structures, vehicles, and more. Be sure to visit their website for additional gift ideas.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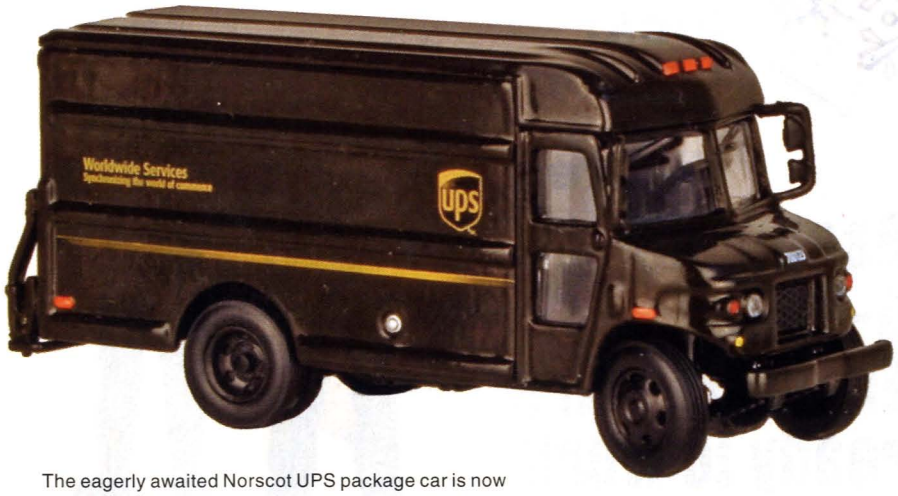
Writer's Pick: HO Scale Vehicle

Norscot delivers UPS trucks for the holidays!



The eagerly awaited Norscot UPS package car is now available. This outstanding replica is the first-ever licensed HO model of an American UPS truck.

By Bill Cawthon

UPS P80 Package Car, HO scale, Item 58008, MSRP: $28.95

Norscot Group
1000 West Donges Bay Rd.
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www.norscot.com

One of the hot items on a lot of model railroader gift lists this year is the Norscot scale model of the ubiquitous brown United Parcel Service P80 truck. UPS actually calls them package cars but whatever term you prefer, you'll make someone very happy when they pull one of these from their stocking this Christmas.

A ready-to-run UPS van has been one of the impossible dreams of model railroaders. There have been models one could turn into a UPS truck, there have been "unofficial" decal sets, but this is the first time a manufacturer has worked with UPS to produce a 1/87-scale model that is ready for immediate use.

One of the best models I have seen from Norscot (and there is some stiff competition for that title), the UPS truck is loaded with features. The rear door rolls up, revealing shelves ready to be loaded, the front wheels, complete with tires with realistic tread, can be posed turning left or right. The doors have nice big glass areas so you can see the detailed interior. This is one sweet model and the perfect addition to any modern-era HO layout.

The molding is sharp and well defined and the paint and markings are excellent. I was really impressed with the quality of the piece.

Something Special

This will be a super gift for your favorite HO modeler. Check it out at your favorite hobby source but don't delay. These will sell though fast!

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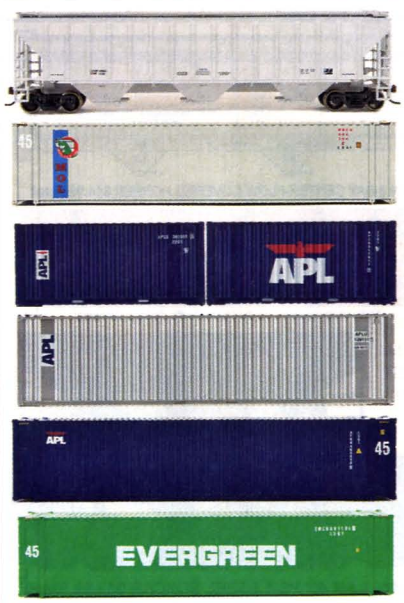

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99245	20' container, 3-pk, APL, large logo, one container nbr	$16.95
99246	40' container, 3-pk, APL, vert. logo, one container nbr	$21.95
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O scale

Williams by Bachmann's Postwar Reproduction Train Sets

Review and Photos by David Otte

Blue Ridge Hauler, MSRP: $599.95
Time Saver Fast Freight, MSRP: $499.95

Williams by Bachmann
1400 East Erie Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19124
215-533-1600 • Fax: 215-744-4699
www.bachmanntrains.com

While the Williams by Bachmann sets come in rather lackluster outer white shipping cartons, the packaging does display these small color end labels inspired by postwar catalog artwork illustrating the set components in all their glory, along with a list of each set's features.

Already have a loop of O gauge 3-rail track and a transformer, but need something new to run under the Christmas tree this year? Are you looking for a train set that will rekindle those long-ago childhood memories or provide your children or grandchildren with ruggedly built toys that are large enough for even the youngest model railroader to handle? Well, if this is the case, Williams has exactly what you're seeking within their Golden Memories product line. Postwar (1945–1969) reproduction trains are a specialty of this manufacturer, who has recently become a member of the Bachmann family. This series celebrates the toy trains that were a staple gift to youngsters back in the 1950s, eventually making model railroading synonymous with the holiday season. Now you too can enjoy this tradition with either the grand steam-powered "Blue Ridge Hauler" or colorful F-unit-led "Time Saver Fast Freight."

First of all, these trains are not "starter sets" in the strictest sense as they do not include track or transformer, but are "train sets" in that Williams has carefully matched locomotives with rolling stock and packaged them in one box. Nonetheless, even if you are a novice without the means to run trains, O-gauge sectional track and power supplies are readily available for separate sale at most hobby shops. Secondly, Williams has individually packaged each of the set components in sturdy reusable boxes and then grouped them together within a plain white shipping carton, providing safe, convenient storage when the trains are not being played with. Finally, both the locomotives and the five pieces of rolling stock included in each set represent popular toy trains once offered by the original Lionel Corporation during the golden postwar years and are faithful replicas right down to their paint schemes and catalog based roadnumbers.

For specifics, let's begin with the "Blue Ridge Hauler." Leading this freight consist is the number 746 Norfolk & Western Class J 4-8-4 introduced to model railroaders in 1957. Her diecast metal engine shell and plastic tender body perfectly capture the streamlined curves of the famous steam locomotive. She features separately applied metal handrails down the sides of her boiler, a shiny whistle and bell mounted on top, a working headlight, and puffing smoke unit. Proudly trailing behind the 746 are two 6464 series boxcars lettered for the Great Northern and Boston & Maine complete with sliding side doors, a Gulf Oil three-dome tank car with metal hand rail and ladders, a number 644625 N&W covered hopper in solemn gray business-like dress, and a Pennsylvania Railroad style N5c caboose, with its unique porthole windows down the car's sides and interior illumination, bringing up the tail.

Jumping to the diesel era, the "Time Saver Fast Freight" is powered by a flashy pair of number 2368 Baltimore & Ohio F3 cab units. The 1956-vintage powered and dummy duo have their plastic carbodies enhanced with roof-mounted metal air horns, access ladders beneath the side doors, glazing in all the window openings, hand grabs on the nose, and see-through metal screens in the rooftop dynamic brake vents. Both twins ride atop diecast metal frames, trucks, pilots, and fuel tanks. Making up the fast freight consist and sharing the same attributes of the "Blue Ridge Hauler's" rolling stock are the colorful 6464 series B&O Sentinel and Time Saver boxcars, bright silver painted Alcoa covered hopper and Sunoco three-dome tank car, and an eye-catching red B&O caboose.

In addition, all the rolling stock in these two sets feature metal add-on brake wheels, authentic metal "staple-end"-style postwar trucks with metal wheels and axles, and magnetic thumb-tack-type working diecast knuckle couplers. Furthermore, the boxcars, cabooses, covered hoppers, and steam tender are outfitted with sturdy stamped metal floors while the plastic tank car frames are well detailed with brake gear.

At the head of these trains, the

These Williams postwar reproduction sets achieve exactly what the manufacturer planned on them to do. For older folks, they will evoke those golden memories of childhoods past and, for youngsters and their families, they will create many new happy memories for years to come. Diesel or steam powered, it's your choice. Both sets feature locomotives with True Blast II digital whistle/horn and bell sounds and include five pieces of colorful rolling stock, which are all beautiful replicas of those famous trains made by the original Lionel Corporation between 1945 and 1969.

Leading the five-car consist of the "Blue Ridge Hauler" set is the famous number 746 N&W Class J 4-8-4. She's built just like the old postwar steamers with diecast metal engine shell, plastic tender body with stamped steel floor, a diecast gearbox with metal gears, and detailed shiny metal running gear. However, her design has been modernized with a more precise can motor with flywheel, an electronic reverse unit, and digital whistle and bell sounds.

These snappily dressed F-units head up the "Time Saver Fast Freight." Crafted after their postwar number 2368 counterparts, the powered and dummy twins feature digital horn and bell sounds, an electronic reverse unit, and an operating headlight plus diecast metal frames, fuel tanks, trucks, pilots, and couplers — just like the original models. The powered unit is also equipped with twin can motors and traction tires allowing it to easily pull a consist four times that which is included in the set.

stately 4.5-pound powered B&O F unit and massive 7-pound Class J are both equipped with diecast gearboxes containing metal gears, have all drive wheels powered, and utilize traction tires for superior tractive effort — sorry, no postwar Magnetraction here! Also, unlike the its 1950s-era brethren, modern electronics are employed throughout each of these Alternating Current powered locomotives including can motors — one large flywheel equipped type in the J and two smaller size motors powering the F-unit's trucks, electronic 6-amp reverse units offering the traditional forward-neutral-reverse-neutral sequencing, and Williams' True Blast II digital whistle/horn and bell sounds.

Not only do our review samples wear faithful postwar paint schemes, the modern production methods used to embellish them offers both of these beautifully decorated sets flawless paint application and high quality, sharp lettering and graphics their golden era counterparts never quite enjoyed. Why, any collector of antique toy trains would be rather envious of the appearance of these sets especially considering the value of a similar original set would run at least three or four times the cost of the Williams suggested retail price.

Of course, being well constructed and looking good is only half the importance in a first-class train set, the other half of the rating all depends on operation. For this test session, I set up two concentric ovals of classic O-gauge tubular rail with O-31 diameter curves (the minimum required for these trains) and connected the two insulated track circuits with old Lionel number 22 turnouts. For power, I chose a modern MTH Z-4000 400-Watt transformer capable of independently controlling two trains. This is probably

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The "Time Saver Fast Freight" includes five pieces of authentic postwar style rolling stock. Starting at the top, we have number 6464400 B&O Time Saver boxcar, the 634656 Alco covered hopper, the 6464625 B&O Sentinel Boxcar, the Sunoco Triple-dome tank car, and bringing up the rear, a B&O red caboose. This crummy has no specific postwar toy train counterpart other than it is based on the Lionel rendering of Pennsy's N5c caboose.

The "Blue Ridge Hauler" consist boasts some colorful cars too including the 6464450 Great Northern boxcar, the 644625 N&W covered hopper, the 6464475 B&M boxcar, the 6425 Gulf tank car, and a N&W postwar N5c style caboose. As with the other Golden Memory Series sets, all cars feature metal trucks, wheels, axles, brake wheels, and working couplers with the cabooses also outfitted with interior illumination.

way more power than the novice would need for either set, but I would recommend an AC power pack with at least an 80-Watt power output that includes a bell and horn button so you can enjoy activating the signals on board the locomotives.

Up and running, both of our motive power samples operated very smoothly out of the box with no need for additional lubrication. Speed control was much more favorable than most of the old postwar engines I have operated and the modern reverse unit worked like a charm. With the engine's respective freight cars in tow, each train measured more than six feet in length and performed flawlessly on my test pike. I also found that either locomotive would easily pull four times its set consist, so expanding these sets is no problem. While the digital whistle/horn and bell sounds can't stand up to some of the full blown sound systems included on many of the O-gauge trains today, they are a far cry better than the old door buzzers and whining whistles of the postwar era. Finally, after adding the recommended drops of smoke fluid (a generous bottle of smoke fluid is included) the Class J steamer turned out to be a good smoker putting out just the right amount of odorless white smoke rings.

Final Thoughts

Williams by Bachmann gets a big thumbs up from me, as these postwar reproduction sets are a great way to either initiate or reawaken this great hobby of ours. So if your family is ready to move up from Thomas the Tank Engine or you have a personal craving for some burly trains with an air of nostalgia about them, then either one of these Williams freight sets will serve you well.

As I have already hinted to my wife, this big kid would be ecstatic to see a Golden Memories set under our tree on Christmas morning!

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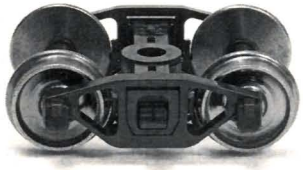

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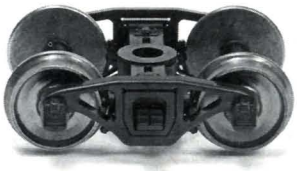

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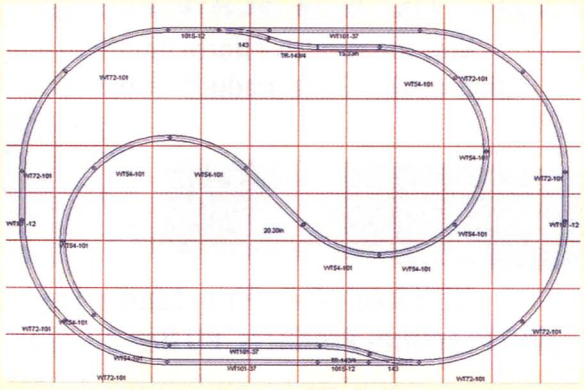

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Writer's Pick: O Scale Figures

Model Power figures will liven up an O-gauge layout

By Bill Cawthon

People Eating, Item 6195, MSRP: $12.98
Homeless People, Item 6198, MSRP: $12.98

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180 Smith St.
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Model Power offers dozens of sets of hand-painted, ready-to-use figures for O scalers, whether they like finescale, tinplate, or O-27 trains, and they are the perfect addition to a model railroader's stocking.

Each set includes multiple figures and the themes cover a broad spectrum of activities, like the sets shown here. "People Eating" includes a fellow with a six-pack who can't wait to get home to hoist a brew, and a gentleman, who hasn't figured out that the brim of his cap goes in front, munching on pizza. "Homeless People" is an assortment of modern-day vagrants. There's a hobo with his bindlestick, a guy stretching out for a nap in a cardboard box, a few beggars and one lucky dude who has already found his soft touch and is enjoying a bottle of wine.

Model Power offers a variety of figure sets compatible with O and O-27 trains. Shown here are two sets, People Eating (upper photo) and Homeless People (lower photo).

The figures are nicely detailed and perfect for creating a mini-scene on a layout. You can get them through your local hobby shop or order direct from Model Power's website where you will find lots of ideas to make a model railroader's holiday bright.

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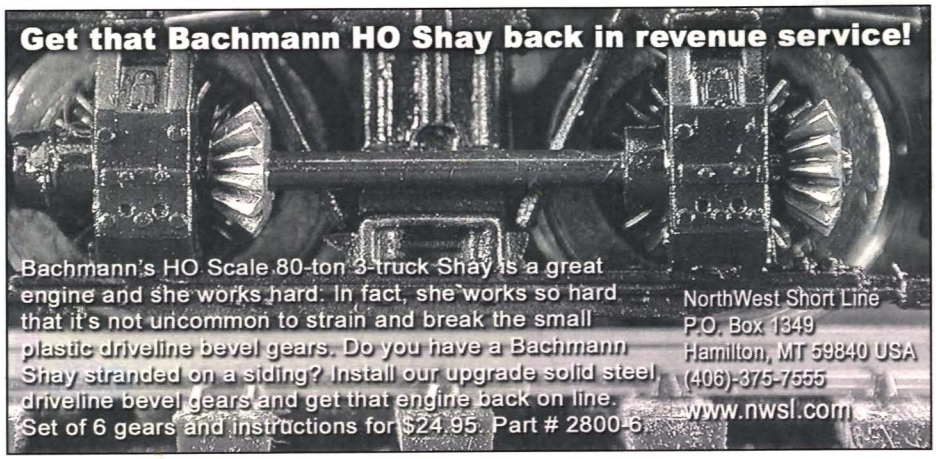
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Writer's Pick: N Scale Bridge Kit

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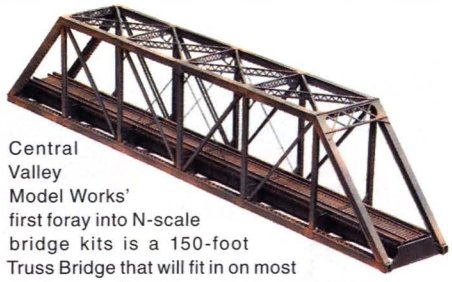

Central Valley Model Works' first foray into N-scale bridge kits is a 150-foot Truss Bridge that will fit in on most modern-era layouts.

By Al Skinner, Photo by CVM

150-foot Truss Bridge Kit Item No. 1810, MSRP: $24.95

Central Valley Model Works
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If you or somebody you know has any kind of N-scale layout, it probably needs a bridge. If it doesn't, make a place on it for Central Valley Model Works' N-scale 150-foot Through Truss Bridge. If you've been in general model railroading for a while you know what a CVMW bridge kit is. For those who haven't it means "a really, really, really excellent bridge." The kit is made of styrene, can accommodate either code 80 or 55 rail, and has a vertical clearance of about 1-1/2 inches from the rail head, an end-to-end length of 11-15/32 inches, and a shoe-shoe length of approximately 11-1/4 inches (center to center).

Even Better!

I received a fully assembled model from the company, but based on the instructions, it looks like this kit could easily go together in an evening or two. Further sweetening the deal, Central Valley is offering a special: for a limited time, the kit is retailing for five dollars off the normal price of $29.95! Hey, Santa, if I'm a good boy, will the CVMW elves get me an N-scale subdivided Pratt curved-top-chord double-track truss bridge for next Christmas?

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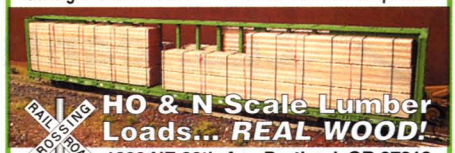

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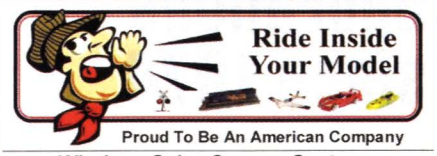

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Writer's Pick: Lubricants

LaBelle: The name for smooth operations since 1974

Review and Photos by Dick Karnes

Track Cleaner and Conditioner for "DC" and "DCC" Train Operation (No. 105), MRSP: $9.98
Multi-Purpose Light Oil (No. 108), MRSP: $6.98
"If It Moves – Lube It" DVD, MRSP: $14.98

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Improve operation in both DC and DCC modes with the new Labelle #105 Track Conditioner
Great Instructional DVD covering the many uses of the entire line of Labelle Lubricants

LaBelle Products include the No. 108 Light Oil, a longtime staple of the model railroader's toolbox, and their new No. 105 Track Cleaner and Conditioner. There's also a handy how-to presentation featuring Mike Lech, host of the PBS series "Adventures in Scale Modeling."

I am no stranger to LaBelle lubricants. I have been using their plastic-compatible #106 Grease and #108 Light Oil for decades. So, when presented with the opportunity to see and hear what LaBelle actually has to say about their products and their use, as well as trying out a totally new LaBelle product, I jumped at the chance.

The video presentation is hosted by Mike Lech, whom I must congratulate for his saintly patience in demonstrating the techniques for lubricating the moving parts of a large variety of locomotives in most of the primary model railroad scales. After a while, they all begin to look the same except for size, but Mike plows on, perhaps capturing equipment that's personally recognizable to maybe 95 percent of the model railroad population. He also has chapters on non-railroad models (autos, boats, planes), as well as household lubrication tasks. One thing I learned from him is the importance of lubricating the mating truck and body bolster surfaces where electricity needs to flow (like tender trucks).

Regarding Mike's demos, my only suggestion would be that oil might be more sparingly applied to N and Z locomotives and rolling stock. I find the handy hypodermic-style applicator to be too coarse to use directly for oiling tiny axle bearings. I prefer squeezing a couple of drops onto an impervious surface (glass or styrene will do), dipping the end of a short length of small-diameter piano wire (.025 inches will do nicely) into the oil puddle, and transferring the oil to the lubrication site with the wire. Too much oil on the working parts of a model can result in reduced tractive effort from oil dripping onto rails.

LaBelle No. 108

I have used LaBelle No. 108 oil "forever," and love it. I use it for nearly every moving model railroad part. My exceptions: I use either no lubricant or a little powdered graphite for Teflon parts, and I use LaBelle No. 106 grease for gear trains.

Instead of abrading my rails with various track-cleaning products, I have for a

long time placed one drop of No. 108 on each running rail and distributed it over my entire layout by running trains. A couple times a year did the trick. An occasional swipe with a chunk of Homasote would remove any gunk build-up.

LaBelle No. 105

But the real stunner is the new No. 105 track and wheel conditioner. This comes in an opaque plastic squeeze bottle without an applicator tip extension. I decided to try it on my old 0-6-0 camelback that I wanted to re-introduce to service after being idle for about 15 years. I took the loco apart, installed a DCC decoder, oiled everything with No. 108, greased the mechanism with #106, and even applied a No. 108 oil film to the wheelsets.

Well, my DCC programming track wouldn't recognize the decoder until I pressed heavily on the tender (to get sufficient wheel-rail contact). Once programmed, the loco wouldn't run because of excessively poor power pick-up. So, instead of polishing my wheel treads and my bolster bearings, I tried the LaBelle #105, applying it to the tender truck pivots as well as the loco and tender wheel treads. In order to avoid heavy-handed application of the No. 105, whose tip puts out quite large drops, I used my puddle method. I applied small smears of product with a small flat-blade screwdriver tip. Well, the loco took off perfectly. No disassembly, no abrasive wheel or track cleaning was needed. I am really impressed with this product!

Final Notes

LaBelle now recommends its No. 105 for track cleaning and conditioning rather than No. 108. Included with the No. 105 are pads for cleaning and conditioning the track. I tried some of the No. 105 on a short portion of my freight yard ladder, which looked pretty clean to start with, and I was surprised at the amount of black that came off without any effort. I was pleased that the No. 105 didn't remove any of the Rail Brown paint that I had so painstakingly applied to the tops of my guardrails and wing rails. Loco performance after applying the No. 105 to the track is excellent. I'm going to use the No. 105 the next time my track needs a new oil application.

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Large Scale

Add some Disney Railroading Magic to your holiday!

Review by Bill Cawthon, photos by Bill Cawthon and Wendy Cawthon

Walt Disney World Resort Railroad Train Set, Item #400127458928, MSRP: $64.95
Walt Disney World Resort Railroad Train 13-piece Track Set, Item #400127130008P, MSRP: $12.95

The Disney Store
800-328-0368
www.disneystore.com

The set comes packed in this large box. Better have plenty of wrapping paper!

Walter Elias Disney was a real railfan. After a mouse made him both a legend and a wealthy man, Disney built a live-steam one-eighth scale pike, called the Carolwood Pacific Railroad, in his rather sizable back yard. The Carolwood Pacific was one of the largest miniature railroads ever built. When he was designing Disneyland in the 1950s, one of the first specifics was the park had to have a train running around it. In fact, every Disney theme park ever built in the world has at least one train, and that's not counting the monorails.

The Walt Disney World Resort in Orlando, Florida has a 1.5-mile-long, 3-foot narrow gauge railway that encircles the Magic Kingdom and makes stops at Main Street U.S.A., Frontierland, and Mickey's Toontown Fair. Even though it's a real shortline, it carries more than 1.5 million passengers every year, making it one of America's busiest steam-powered railroads.

Although Walt didn't live to see it, he would have been pleased with the Walt Disney World Resort Railroad, so-named by his older brother, Roy Oliver Disney. Not only would he have enjoyed the train itself, he was a dedicated steam preservationist and the locomotives that run on the railroad today were brought up from the jungles of Mexico, where they were hauling sugar cane.

The Disney World Railroad rosters four locomotives, all built by Baldwin Locomotive Works between 1916 and 1928 and restored for the park. There's the "Walter E. Disney," a 4-6-0 Ten-Wheeler built in 1925, the "Lilly Belle," named for Disney's wife, a 2-6-0 Mogul built in 1928, and two American 4-4-0s, the "Roger E. Broggie," named for one of Disney's imagineers who helped Walt build his home "layout" and played a key role in acquiring the Disney World Railroad's locomotives from Ferrocarriles Unidos de Yucatan (United Railways of Yucatan) in 1968, and "Roy O. Disney," named for Walt's older brother. The "Roger E. Broggie" was built in 1925 and the "Roy O. Disney" was built in 1916.

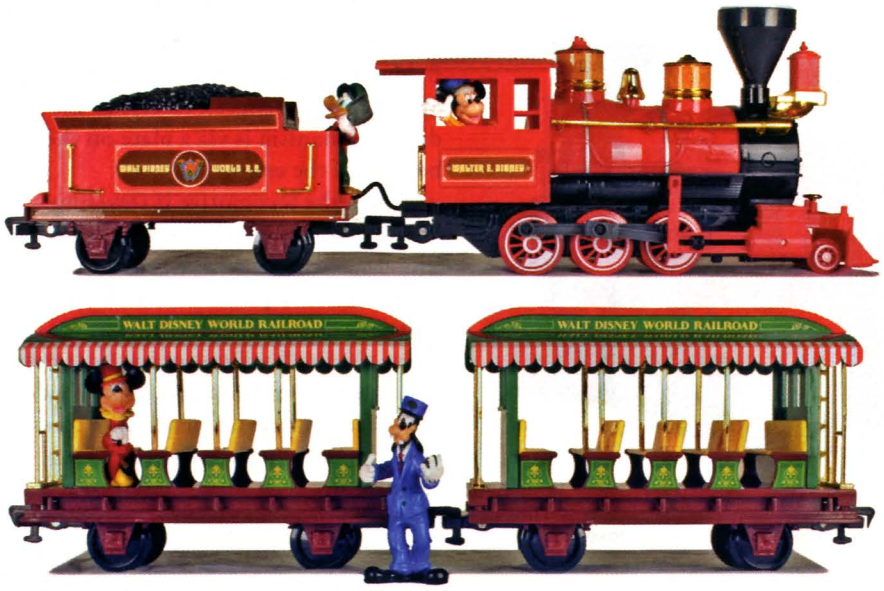
The railroad also has five sets of passenger cars to carry park visitors. A typical consist is a locomotive and five passenger cars with a total capacity of 365 riders and accommodations for two wheelchairs. The trains run year round, except during certain events.

The set contains everything you see here. All that needs to be added is six "C" alkaline batteries.

The Disney Set

Now the Disney Store is offering a train set based on the Walt Disney World Railroad. Designed for the adult-assisted enjoyment of younger railfans, the set includes an abbreviated version of the "Walter E. Disney" train set with a locomotive and two passenger cars. There are twelve curved track sections and six straight track sections, enough for a 77-inch by 47.7-inch oval or a 47.5-inch-diamter circle.

There have been many other Disney-themed train sets, but this one has something special: figures of Mickey



The colorful train includes a 2-6-0 narrow gauge Mogul, tender, and two tour cars. Mickey, Donald and Minnie are ready to ride while Goofy will make sure everything is more or less on time.

Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, and Goofy scaled to fit the train. Mickey, naturally, is the engineer and he can be posed waving from the cab. Donald, ill tempered as always, is the hard-working fireman, poised with his shovel and a scowl in the tender. Minnie, dressed in her Sunday best, is posed in a seated position, ready to ride the train. Poor Goofy, the conductor, is checking his watch and is the only figure that doesn't seem to fit inside the train.

While this is more of a toy than a true scale replica, the track gauge scales out at 1/20.3, or G gauge. While I didn't have the measurements of the prototype handy, the drivers on the locomotive scale out at just over 30 inches in diameter, much smaller than the 44-inch drivers on the full-size version.

One other blooper that deserves mention: the locomotive is supposed to be a replica of the "Walter E. Disney" but apparently someone forgot to tell the designers of the miniature about the extra axle on the lead truck. The locomotive in the set is a 2-6-0 Mogul, so it's actually a replica of the "Lilly Belle."

In the final analysis, it probably won't matter to the youngsters for whose enjoyment this set is intended. The drivers turn and the colors match the "Walter E. Disney," so the Disney it shall be.

Speaking of colors, the Disney train isn't technically a holiday set, but the bright red and green colors are perfect for the season. Besides, since it isn't officially a holiday set it can be enjoyed all the year round!

The various components and pieces come packed in a Styrofoam tray. The locomotive, cars, figures, and some track are in the top — flip the tray over and you'll find the rest of the track pieces. Be sure to look for the instruction sheet that is stuffed in one of the track slots. I almost overlooked it.

Set Up

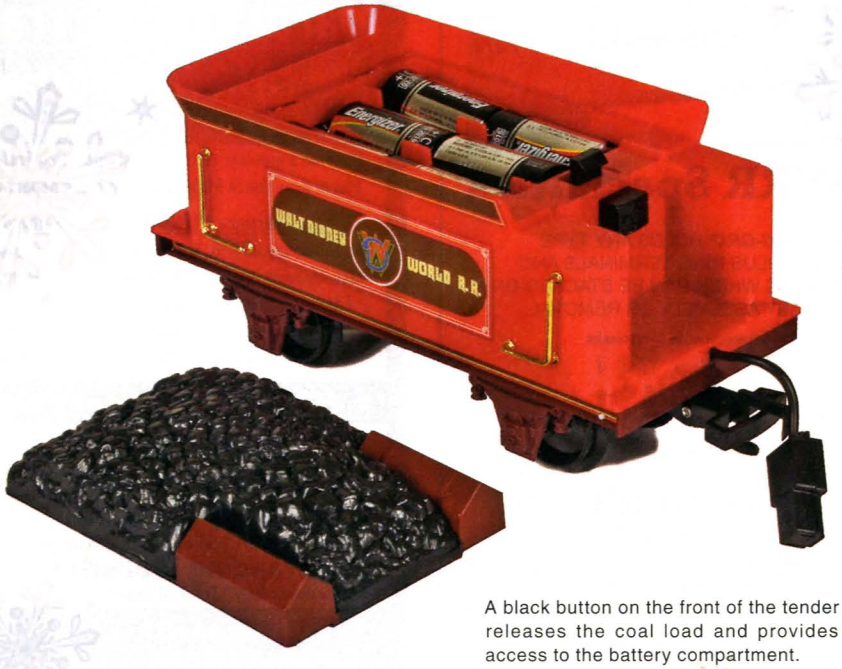
The plastic track is easy to assemble: just click the pieces together. You can make a 47.5-inch diameter loop to circle the Christmas tree or add the two or more straight pieces to make a 77-inch by 47.5-inch oval. Since the track isn't powered, it's perfectly safe to set up on carpet. The track sections measure about 5/8 of an inch from the bottom of the ties to the top of the rail so even a moderate shag shouldn't present a problem. If the train will be running round the tree, the track will also keep the train away from Mom's antique tree skirt.

The train is battery-powered, using six "C" alkaline batteries installed in the tender. The instructions are very specific about using alkaline batteries, so it's probably a good idea to use them. Pushing a black button on the front of the tender allows the coal load to be removed, exposing the battery compartment. Install the batteries as shown on the diagram and replace the lid. Plug the connector from the tender into the receptacle in the back of the locomotive. Incidentally, the instructions recommend removing the batteries after each play session.

The red top of the steam dome is the on/off and directional switch. Press once to start the locomotive moving in a forward direction and press it a second time to stop. A third press gets the locomotive in reverse. There's only one speed, a leisurely 15 scale miles per hour, so it's easy to keep up with the train to bring it to a stop or switch directions.

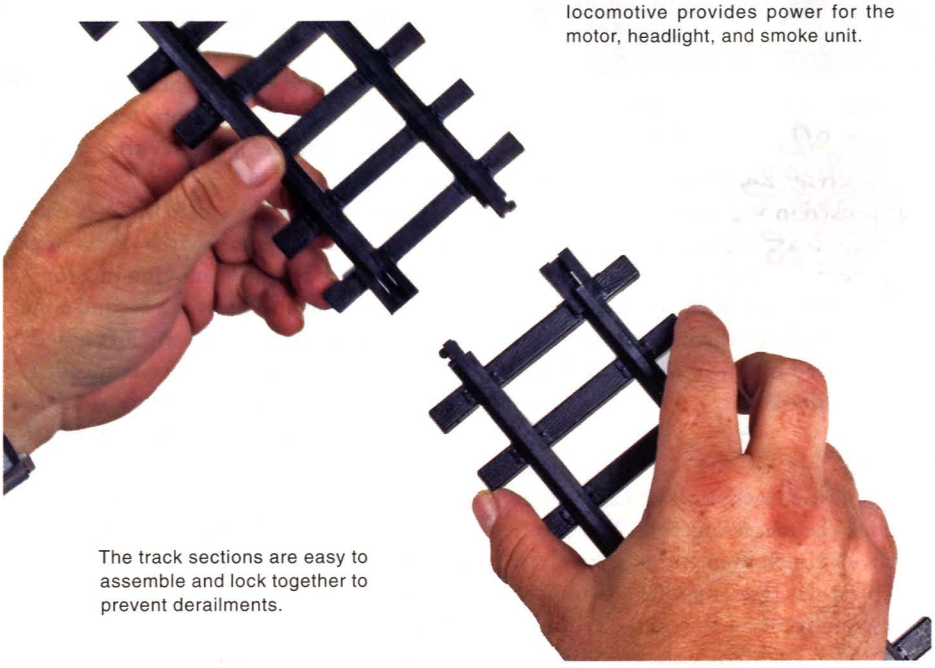
As a bonus, the Disney train comes with sounds including a bell, steam whistle, and chuffing sound. Twisting the bell turns the sound on and off. As far as I could ascertain, there is no provision for a volume control.

The lead and trailing drivers are pow-



A black button on the front of the tender releases the coal load and provides access to the battery compartment.

A connector from the tender to the locomotive provides power for the motor, headlight, and smoke unit.



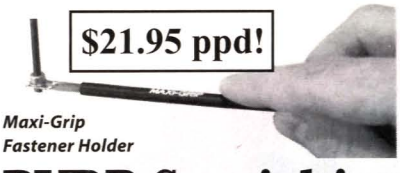
The track sections are easy to assemble and lock together to prevent derailments.

ered and are equipped with traction tires. Despite its light weight, the miniature Baldwin has no trouble pulling its load of cars and passengers. Access to the drive mechanism is via a plate on the bottom of the engine.

When the locomotive is traveling in either direction, the headlight is illuminated and a smoke generator in the smokestack puffs tiny smoke rings. Not only does it delight the young folks, the small volume of smoke is more pleasant than the more realistic clouds produced by scale locomotives. Access to the smoke unit involves removing the Phillips-head screw closest to the cab in the circular plate on top of the smokestack. When the screw is removed, you can add a few drops of oil through the hole and then replace the screw. The instructions recommend household oil, but I would assume you could use any of the various scented oils. A fantasy train puffing vanilla or fresh pine smoke? That's what magic's all about, right?

Expansion

The Disney Store has an expansion track package with six curved sections, six straight sections and a 90-degree crossing that should allow you to create a figure-eight layout or construct a layout that meanders among the presents. Such a set is unusual among train sets like this but it's a great idea: you could set up quite an empire and keep the fun going long after the holidays are over.



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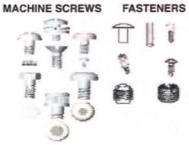

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The "Walter E. Disney" is ready to depart with its crew and passenger. Mickey is waiting for Goofy's signal and Donald is bellyaching again.

Age Recommendations

The set is not recommended for children under three years of age as there are parts that could pose a choking hazard. The figures and track are solid molds with no articulated parts but the locomotive, tender, and cars contain some fittings that could break off. Disney Consumer Products recommends the train set for children six years and older, but younger kids can enjoy the action with adult supervision. And it's not hard to "supervise," either. My college-age daughter, Wendy, and I had a lot of fun setting up the train and watching it do its stuff. We could easily see having the train around our tree and I thought it would be fun to make tunnels and whatnot for the train to run through. My older grandson, Danny, hasn't seen the train yet but his three-year-old brother Eric is fascinated by it.

Closing Thoughts

The Walt Disney World Resort Railroad Train Set is only available through the Disney Store and I believe it is offered only online or via telephone order. I haven't seen it at the Disney Store in Houston, but it might be at others or in the theme parks. The Disney Store does offer expedited shipping, so you should still have time to order one and have it in time to be an enchanting holiday display or a wonderful gift for your favorite Disney fan.

It's simple; it works and the inclusion of the four Disney characters will add hours of play value to the enjoyment of this train set and the service from the Disney Store is first-rate. I highly recommend them both.

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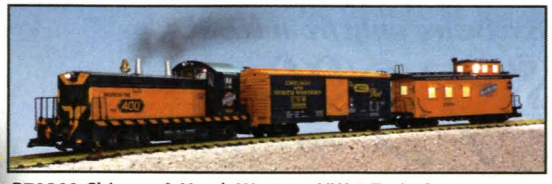

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By Dick Karnes

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Semi trailers in several liveries are available from S Helper Service. The Swift Premium ad on this handsome REA trailer is just one of nine peel 'n' stick billboard ads that are included. S Helper Service photo.

S Helper Service has several beautifully finished, fully assembled semi trailers priced at $19.95 each. These are identical to the trailers sold with their TOFC cars. The No. 01878 Railway Express trailer shown comes with nine different full-color "peel 'n' stick" advertisements for its flanks. The prototype for this 34-foot trailer, built by Utility Trailer Co., has vertical posts on 24-inch centers and a rounded nose. Even the tires have raised brand name and rating lettering — often several different tire brands per trailer! Several of these trailers would be right at home at the various industrial loading docks on your S-scale layout. S Helper Service also offers 35-foot Great Dane trailers (same price, not shown) in several schemes.

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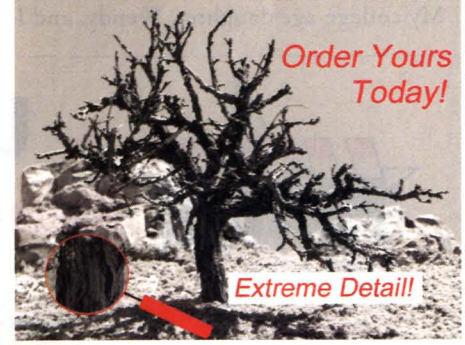

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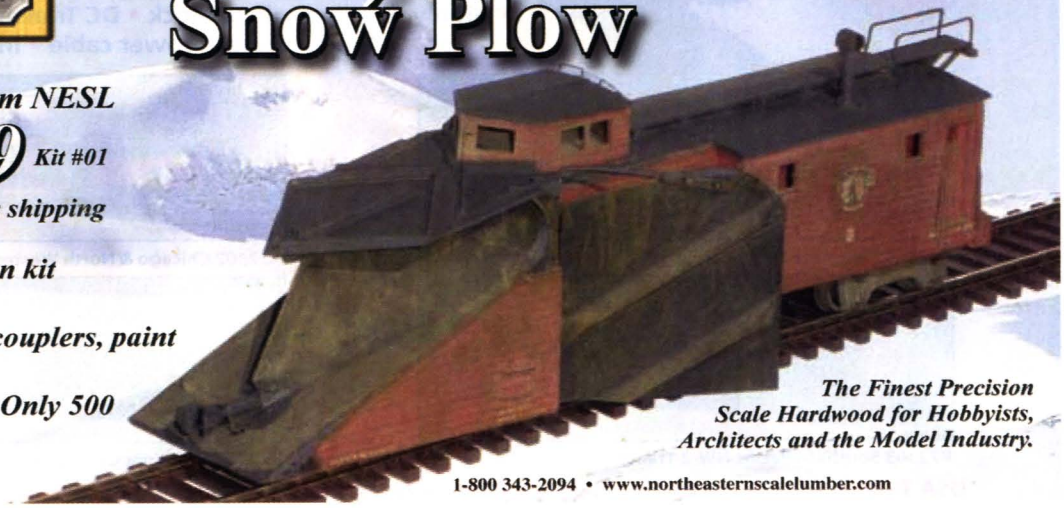

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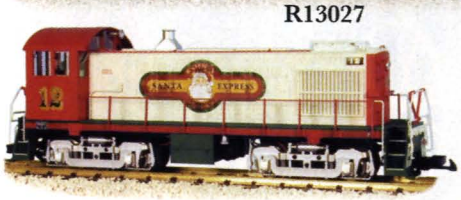

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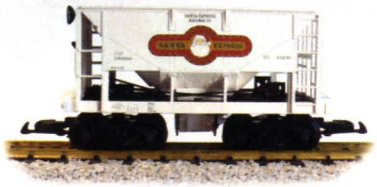

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Writer's Pick: S Scale Accessories

A Trio of S Scale Baggage Cart Kits

By Dick Karnes

Kit No. T-2078, MSRP: $9.95

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421 Hopkins Rd.
Dummerston, VT 05301
800-653-8214 • Fax: 802-258-3869
www.bantamodelworks.com

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Lehigh Valley Models
308 Indian Rock Dam Rd.
York, Pa. 17403
717-747 0493
kpbrick@aol.com

Kit No. DP2012, MSRP: $12.00

Ragg's to Riches
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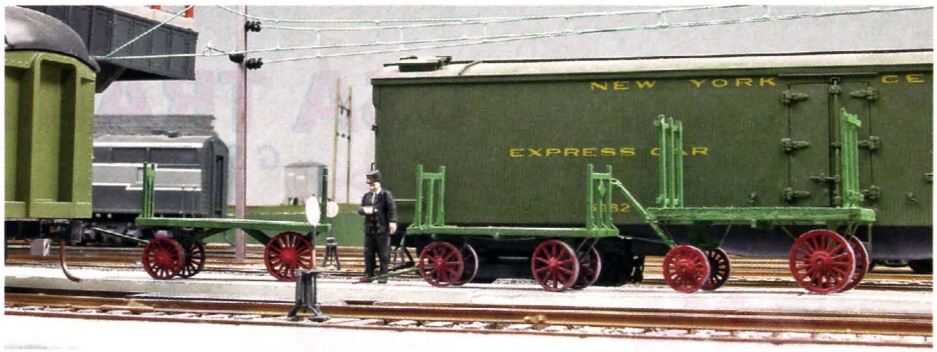
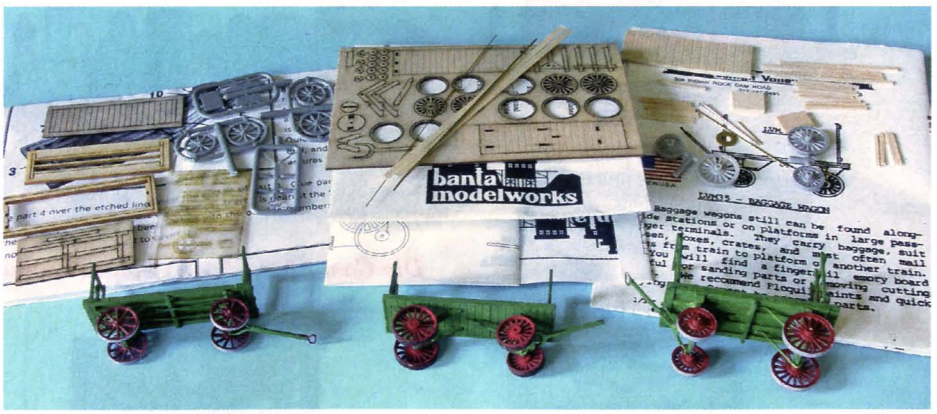
570-376-2025
www.raggstoriches.biz



Three baggage carts and a CNR conductor await the arrival of the northbound Grand Isle Limited. The carts, from left to right, are from Banta Modelworks, Ragg's to Riches, and Lehigh Valley Models.

Baggage carts of this type were once ubiquitous. This one, at the preserved Northern Pacific station in Issaquah WA, has handles and turntables at both ends.



The three kits and the carts they produce are, from left to right, Ragg's, Banta, and Lehigh Valley. The differences in kit styles are striking.

It's unusual in any scale to find three different kits for the same product. It's all the more surprising in S scale! Nevertheless, that's what we have from Banta Model Works, Lehigh Valley Models, and Ragg's Parts. Each of these kits incorporates a different approach and produces a somewhat different configuration. I'll cover each in alphabetic sequence.

The easiest of the three kits to build is the Banta kit. Assembly time for me was about an hour. The kit is entirely laser-cut wood except for the brass rod for the wheel axles. Even the wheels are built up from three layers of laser-cut parts. I used Aleene's Tacky Glue for the entire assembly, except the attachment of the tongue and yoke, which I attached with cyanoacrylate cement. No tongue handle is included in the kit, but one can easily be fabricated from brass wire by the modeler.

The Lehigh Valley kit is an example of a classic craftsman kit. It consists of pre-cut stripwood, styrene wheels, brass rod, straight pins, and a small washer that must be cut in half to construct the front axle turntable. I used Aileen's Tacky Glue and cyanoacrylate cement for the assembly. Construction time was about two hours.

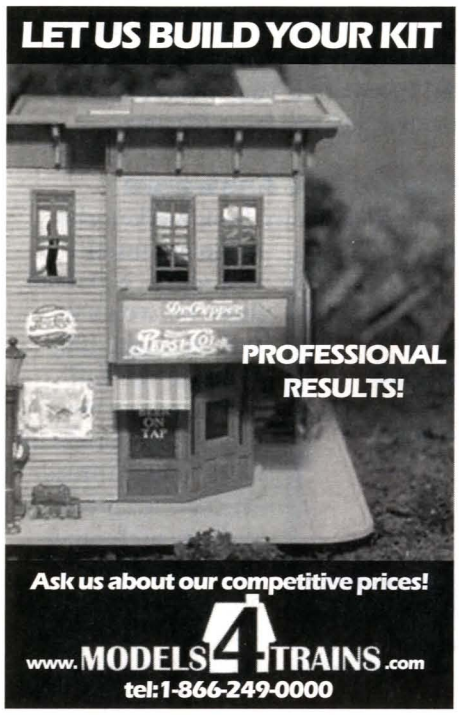
The Ragg's kit is the most complete in terms of prototype detail. It contains several injection-molded styrene parts as well as laser-cut plastic and wood components and brass wire. Assembly is by far the most exacting of the three kits. The completed cart includes truss rods and reinforcing angles and plates. I used cyanoacrylate cement almost exclusively to assemble this kit. My first one took about three hours.

Superficially, the Banta and Ragg's

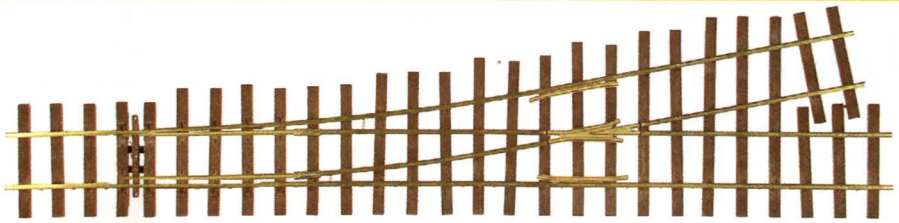
carts are the same general configuration. The Lehigh Valley cart is higher, and the end bents are taller as well. The fact that these are basically tiny structures is the reason for the relatively long construction times. I found that my head-mounted magnifier was essential to do a neat job. Now that I am past the learning curve, I expect that the next time (I have six more to build), construction times will be halved.

Mix-N-Match

With each of the baggage carts coming in between $9.00 and $12.00, it would be easy to add one of each to your favorite S-scale modeler's stocking. They make for a great way to spend a cold winter evening, and will add wonderful dimension to a busy depot or station.



On30 TURNOUTS
From Micro Engineering



The Micro Engineering On30 #5 Code 83 or 70 Turnouts are DCC compatible right out of the package with no modifications necessary and are also fully compatible with traditional DC block power systems. The turnouts match Micro Engineering On30 Flex-Trak and feature small, scale size spikes, no tie plates which was normal practice on narrow gauge railroads, slide plate and rail brace detail, sprung switch rails, cast metal frog and guard rails, optional positioning of headblock ties on either side of the turnout, and detailed instructions including wiring. See them at your dealer or order direct.

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Writer's Pick: Tool

What Modelers Have Been Waiting For

Rail Joiner Installation Tool from Angelo Hobbies Tools

By Art Lake

Item #: Tt83 Stainless Steel Rail Joiner Installation Tool for (N-scale Code 83) Also available for HOn3 (Code83) and HO (Code100)
MSRP; $14.95 each or $39.95 for all three

Angelo Hobbies Tools
555B Bonner
Fort Worth, TX 76148
817-429-0190
www.angelohobbies.com

The AHT (N) Rail Joiner is a tool the N-scale (and HO) masses have been waiting for. This very effective device was designed to save time and a lot of pain when laying traditional track. On the end opposite of the concave portion of this tool, is a small hole to insert the rail joiner into. Simply slide the joiner on the track and presto! That is all there is to it. On the concave end, there is a wide slot used for removing rail joiners and the small slot on the other side of the same end is used for adjusting the rail joiner on the rail. The packaging includes diagrams explaining the "how's" and "uses" of this handy tool. However, when studying this tool, you will find it fairly easy to figure out. The website does not have any instructions that will assist you on understanding the tool uses, but I am sure if you e-mail or make a phone call they will be happy to assist you. The Rail Installation Tool is made of stainless steel and will last a lifetime.

Have you ever inserted the rail joiner in your finger or thumb instead of the track rail? Angelo Hobbies Tools have come up with a tool that makes installing rail joiners easy.

Prayers Are Answered

Angelo Hobbies Tools markets this rail joiner installation tool in N, HOn3, (both for code 83) and HO (code 100) scales, so you will be able to save the fingers and thumbs of most model railroaders. This is a great and very useful tool that I plan to use often. And it's the type of gift that will make many a model railroader happy.

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Writer's Pick: HO/N Laser-Cut Structure

A Truck Dump for any Era

By Dick Foster

Truck Dump Kit, HO-scale, Item No. 77, MSRP: $21.95
Truck Dump Kit, N-scale, Item No. 177, MSRP: $19.95

Blair Line
P.O. Box 1136 Carthage, MO 64836
417-359-8300 • Fax: 417-359-8844
www.blairline.com

The Truck Dump kit from Blair Lines is a neat stocking stuffer that Santa can easily get down the chimney on Christmas Day. It will only take a few hours to assemble and put into operation.

The kit comes with two pages of instructions, some of them full-sized. I started out by reading the instructions several times since there are similar parts and you don't want to get them mixed up. Only a razor blade, good carpenter's glue, and stain are needed to build the kit. I stained all the wood parts by dipping them in a MinWax Dark Walnut stain, which seemed more realistic than painting the parts a weathered black. After the parts were dry, I used a combination of TiteBond Carpenters glue and CA adhesive to put the kit together. All parts fit just right. The stairs were the hardest so I wouldn't recommend them for the novice in laser-kit building. I used a toothpick to apply a tiny drop of glue to each stair riser and then put the step into place. A little touchup and it was time to find a suitable small hillside or edge of a road beside the tracks for the Truck Dump.

This kit offers a good challenge for the beginner and an interesting detail not often seen on model railroads. At under $22.00 in either scale, it's an economical gift that will make for an enjoyable winter evening's entertainment.

Blair Lines' Truck Dump is a model of a structure common in the Appalachian coal region but similar structures can be found anywhere trucks load coal, stone, or other materials directly onto railcars. The kit is available in HO- and N-scale.

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Large Scale Train Set

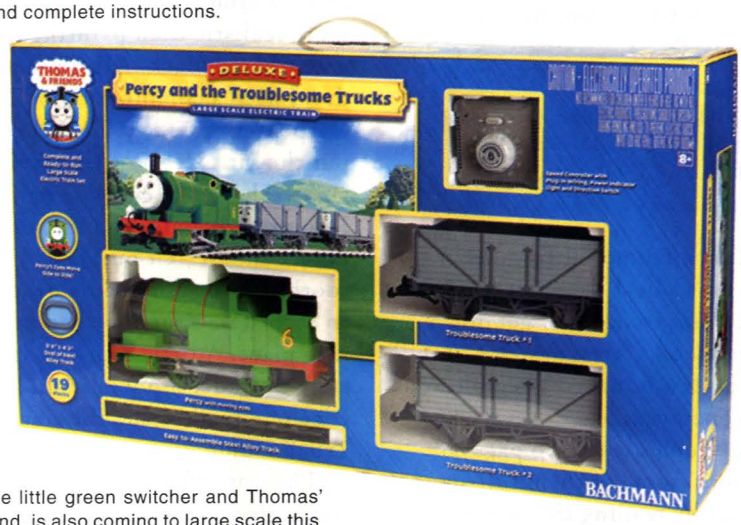
Bachmann brings Thomas to garden railroading

Review by Bill Cawthon,
Photos courtesy of Bachmann Trains

Thomas with Annie & Clarabel Set, Item No. 90068, MSRP: $385.00
Percy with the Troublesome Trucks Set, Item No. 90069, MSRP: $385.00

Bachmann Trains
1400 East Erie Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19124
215-533-1600 • Fax: 215-744-4699
www.bachmanntrains.com

The new Thomas the Tank Engine train set is coming to Bachmann large scale this month. Look for this box at your local hobby shop. It contains the train, track, controller and power supply, and complete instructions.



Percy, the little green switcher and Thomas' good friend, is also coming to large scale this holiday season. Just like Thomas, Percy's set comes with everything you need to get up an running in short order.

The world's most famous London, Brighton & South Coast Railway E2 Class 0-6-0T has graduated to a new, much larger world. The new Thomas the Tank Engine set is the latest member of Bachmann's Large Scale Garden Railway line and should be available at your favorite hobby retailer by the time you read this. So that Thomas doesn't have to explore the world outside of Sodor by himself, Bachmann is also releasing a set including Thomas' friend Percy, the green 0-4-0 switcher.

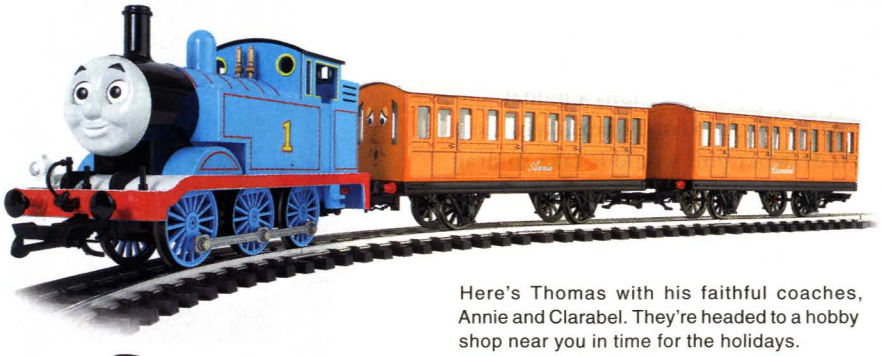
The new Bachmann sets weren't available in time for us to give them a thorough test, but they will be in stores in time for the holidays. We'll be putting Thomas through his paces in the New Year, but you can be enjoying him running around your tree before then. This is another one of those "Open Before Christmas" presents; it's just more fun to enjoy the train while enjoying the holiday season.

The sets include either Thomas the Tank Engine or Percy (each with moving eyes), Annie and Clarabel or the Troublesome Trucks, 14 pieces of indoor track to make a 5-foot, 4-inch by 4-foot, 3-inch oval, speed controller, wall power pack, an illustrated instruction manual, and a DVD-format instructional video. The sturdily designed components are either plastic or diecast metal and, with proper care, will provide years of railroading fun for the young and young-at-heart.

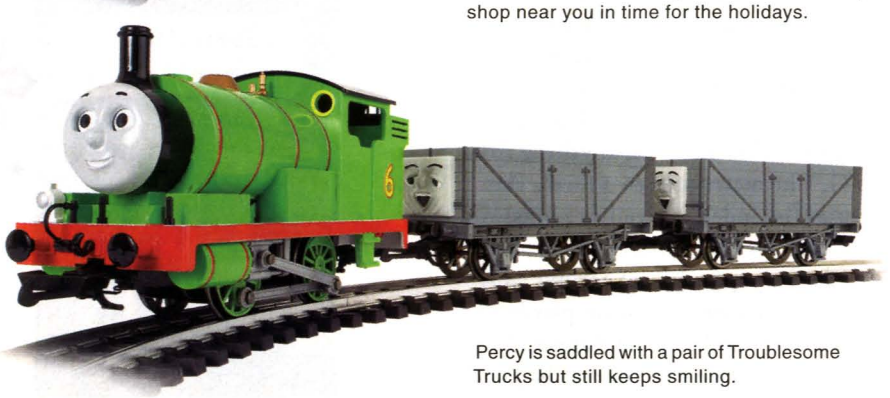
One of the nice things about the Thomas and Percy sets is the fact they can be expanded. Bachmann has extra indoor track pieces so you can build your own Sodor Railway. There are turnouts and crossings, even a grade crossing with flashing lights and arms that raise and lower. If you want to run Thomas in your garden come spring, suitable track is available from your favorite hobby retailer.

While we haven't gotten any hands-on time with Thomas, our previous experiences with Bachmann Large Scale have been favorable and we have no reason to expect these new sets will be any different.

If Thomas isn't your cup of tea, Bachmann has other sets, including two holiday-themed packages. The "Night Before Christmas" set (Item 90037, MSRP: $375.00) includes a 4-6-0 Ten Wheeler steam locomotive with operating headlight, smoke, and synchronized sound), a tender, a gondola, and a bobber caboose, along with the same amount of track in the Thomas sets and a Santa Claus figure. The "North Pole Special" (Item 90044, MSRP: $450.00) set also comes complete with a 4-6-0 Ten Wheeler steam locomotive like the one in the "Night Before Christmas" set, tender, North Pole & Southern flat car, a Christmas boxcar, a "Season's Greetings" combine with lighted interior, 20 pieces of indoor track to make an eight-foot, two-inch by four-foot, three-inch oval and engineer and fireman figures. Both sets contain speed controllers, power supplies, illustrated instruction manuals, and an instructional DVD.



Here's Thomas with his faithful coaches, Annie and Clarabel. They're headed to a hobby shop near you in time for the holidays.



Percy is saddled with a pair of Troublesome Trucks but still keeps smiling.

The Thomas and Percy sets are recommended for ages eight and up, but younger children can enjoy the trains with adult supervision. If you have toddlers, they need to be watched and the train needs to be taken up when the day's run has ended. There are small parts that could come loose and present a hazard to kids who are still exploring the world by taste.

Bring The Magic Home for the Holidays

Millions of children have grown up watching Thomas on TV; some of them are now adults themselves with children getting to know Thomas and his friends. Now Thomas can make your holiday more fun in a big way. Sets are due to ship in early December, so ask your hobby retailer to put one aside for you. Sir Topham Hatt and *Model Railroad News* recommend adding a cheeky blue engine to your holiday roster.

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HO Scale Models

Writer's Pick: Micro-Mark Digital Pull Meter

Measure the pull on locos and trains — and more!

By John Sipple

Digital Pull Meter, Item # 84518, MSRP: $19.95

Micro-Mark
340 Snyder Avenue
Berkeley Heights, NJ 07922
800-255-1066 • Fax: 908-665-9383
www.micromark.com

Here's a little goody for around twenty bucks that will answer all sorts of questions a model railroader might have. For example, how much drawbar pull would it take to drag that passenger train up that grade? How much drawbar pull does that locomotive develop on the same grade? Compare them on the straight and level and see how a grade changes them. To do that, you're going to need a special scale.

Micro-Mark has just the item. Since it will measure up to 264 ounces (16.5 pounds) in increments of 0.01 ounces, you can use this meter on anything from Z to G. The meter uses two small, flat batteries (included) as well as a brass rod you may shape for a variety of purposes. I chose to use paper clips of various gauges to create an assortment of coupler hooks for both HO- and G-scale Kadees. As delivered, the scale will need to be hand-held unless you invent your own solution for fixing it to the tracks.

When it comes to stocking stuffers, this is a dandy, but even then, you should check out the rest of Micro-Mark's free catalog or browse their website. Next thing you know, there will be a box delivered to your home chock-full of stocking stuffers!

This photo is of the Pull Meter on premade HO track, hooked to the coupler of an HO steam loco's tender. The meter reads [nnn.nn], and is reading 0.00 in the photo. The pull hook used here comes from a steel paper clip.

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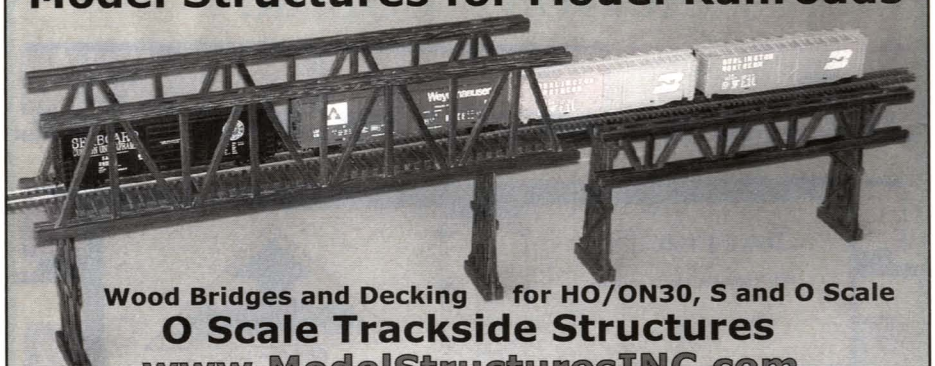

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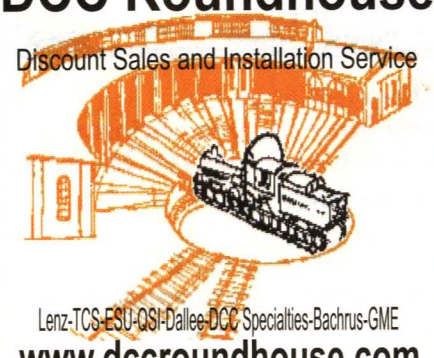

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Writer's Pick: Walthers Catalog

The 2010 HO Reference Book by Walthers is the ultimate stuffer!

By John Sipple

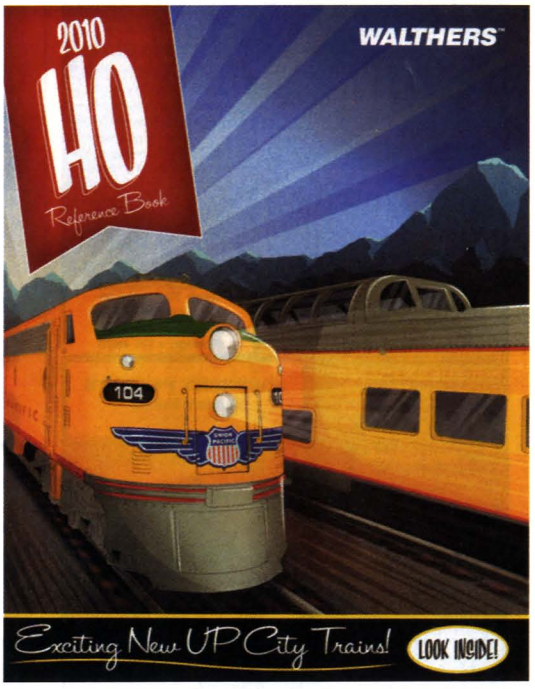
2010 HO Scale Model Railroad Reference Book, #913-210, MSRP: $14.98

Walthers
P.O. Box 3039 Milwaukee, WI 53201
800-487-2467
Fax: 800-807-2647 • Fax: 414-527-4423
www.walthers.com

Over the years, I have consulted Walthers' "Wish Book" several times a month. As much as I use their online service, the paper catalog lets me browse the pages before and after my search, often turning up related items I might not have considered otherwise. That's what happens when you flip real pages.

Your local hobby dealer relies on the Walthers' Catalog when you come in looking for some part, a particular paint color, or a 40-foot PS-1 boxcar wearing a certain roadname. In your easy chair at home, you can assemble your own order and then bring your list to your local dealer to turn into a quick order. With over a thousand pages and dozens of merchandise categories, it's like having a model railroad superstore right in your lap!

Of course, all of Walthers' fine model products are listed, but so are those of hundreds of manufacturers that turn to Walthers for distribution. And all of this is for just HO. Walthers also produces a catalog for Z & N scales.



It's the same price but is item #913-250. With color-keyed squares at the upper outside corner of each page letting you know which section you are in, it's easy to just browse. Whether buying or just looking, the model railroader will never tire of this book!

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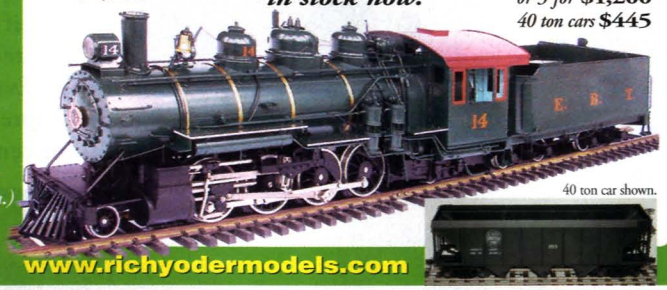

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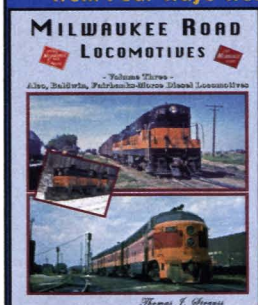
Two New Books for 2009 from Four Ways West Publications



Ready during November!

This is the third volume of a set featuring Milwaukee Road Locomotives in-depth. There are many photographs, both color and black & white, featuring diesel locomotives built by Alco, Fairbanks-Morse, and Baldwin. This book is written by a retired Milwaukee Road engineer who worked very closely with all of these locomotive types. 160 pages!
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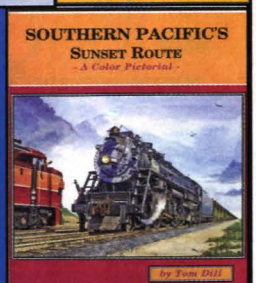

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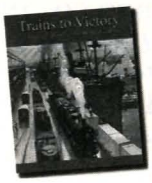
Trains to Victory

America's Railroads in World War II
By Don Heimburger and John Kelly



Trains to Victory tells the dramatic story of the years 1941-1945 when U.S. railroads, using fewer cars and locomotives than in WWI, moved more tonnage and more passengers than ever before. The book discusses the implications of the war on the railroads, embarkation of troops and materiels, how the Military Railway Service joined the fight and what was happening on U.S railroads during the war.

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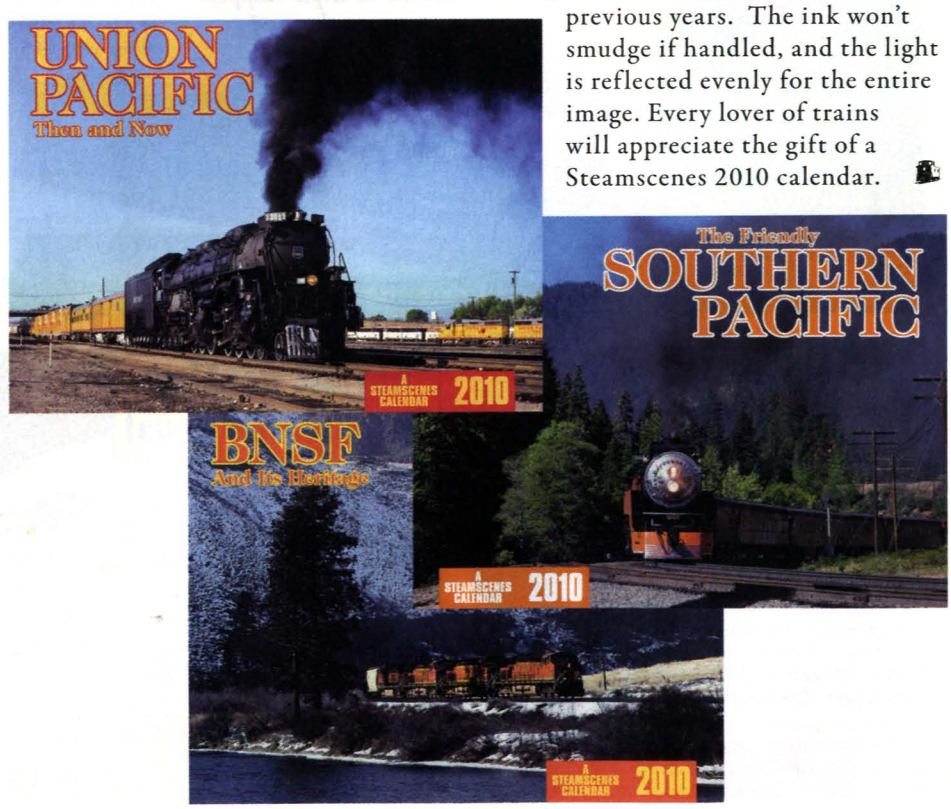
In addition to the UP, SP, and BNSF calendars for 2010 pictured here, Steamscenes also is offering *Seasons of Steam on Britain's Railways*, *World of Steam*, *Canadian Trains Through the Years*, *Passing Trains*, and *Narrow Gauge Memories*. Be sure and ask at your dealer for the calendar, or order directly from Nils Huxtable at Steamscenes.

We have featured Steamscenes' calendars in our pages over the past several years due to the quality of photos drawn from many great photographers. The calendars relate very well to model railroading because they are on our walls the year round to remind us of the roots for the hobby we love so much. Each month, along comes another beautiful image to inspire us anew.

It's rare these days to pay the same price for something we've bought over the years and actually get more for the money. How can a calendar give us more than the months of the year and a new batch of beautiful photos? Publisher Nils Huxtable has gone to his printing company to add more value in two ways. First, the color images are created using a "stochastic" printing screen that looks more like photographic grain than the older line-screening process.

Then each photo receives an additional clear coating. The image is printed on smooth matte paper and the matte spot varnish gives it the appearance of a photographic print. These two techniques cost more, give a much more attractive appearance, and yet are costing you no more than previous years. The ink won't smudge if handled, and the light is reflected evenly for the entire image. Every lover of trains will appreciate the gift of a Steamscenes 2010 calendar.



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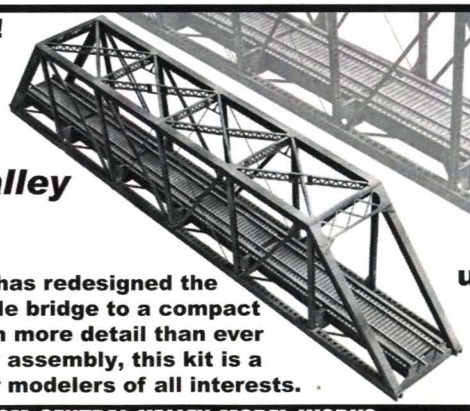
Bridge Kit!



Central Valley has redesigned the classic HO-scale bridge to a compact 1/160 size! With more detail than ever and super easy assembly, this kit is a MUST-HAVE for modelers of all interests.

Not only for use on an N-scale railroad; this classic bridge kit is perfect for use as a display on your desk-top or trophy cabinet.

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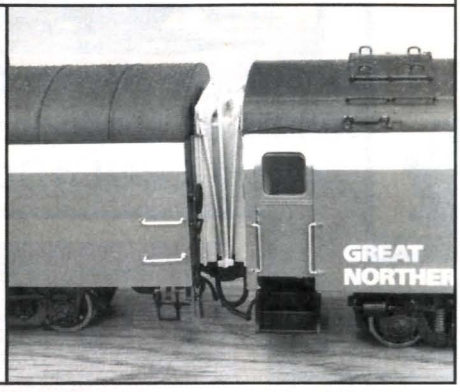

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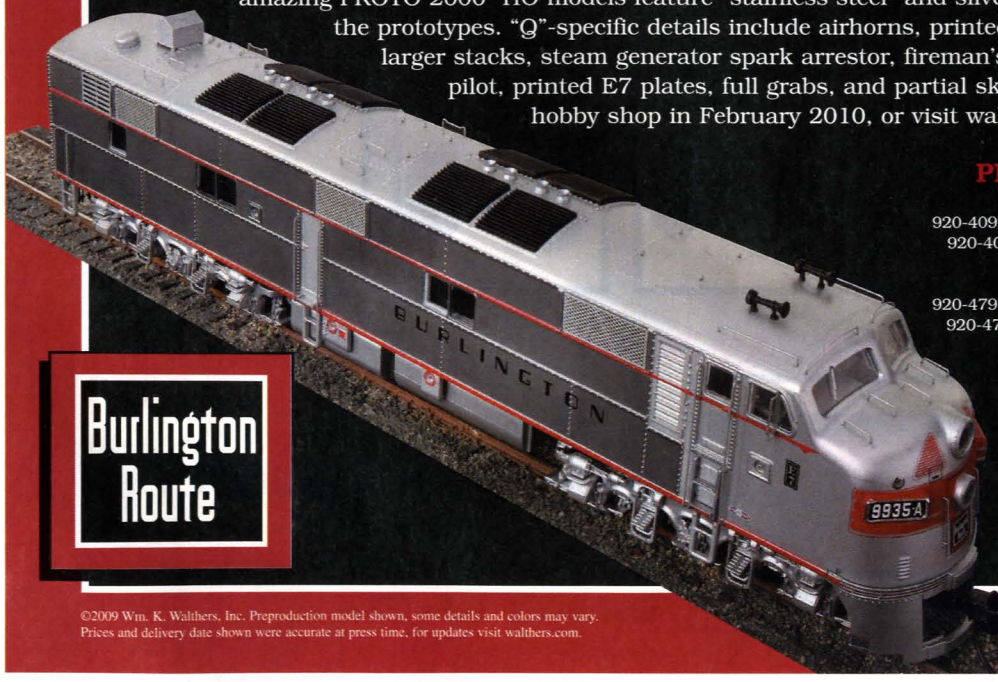

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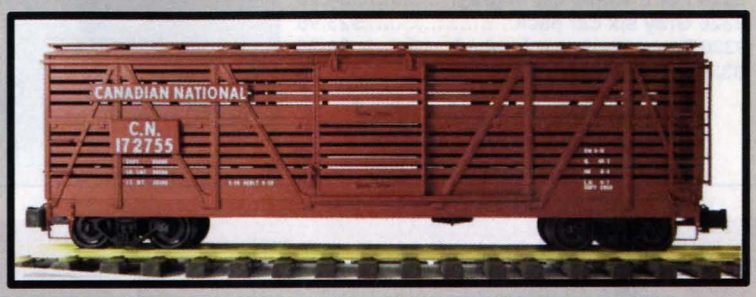

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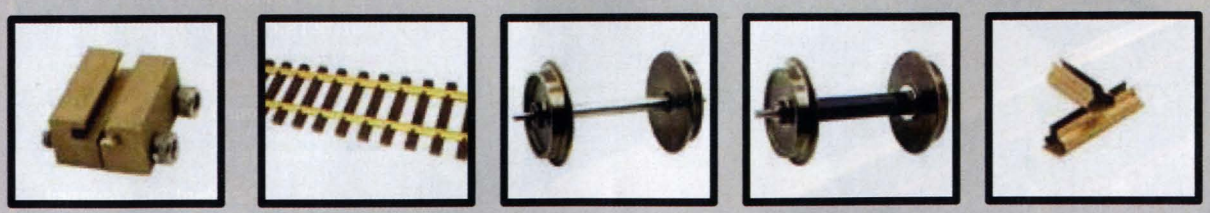
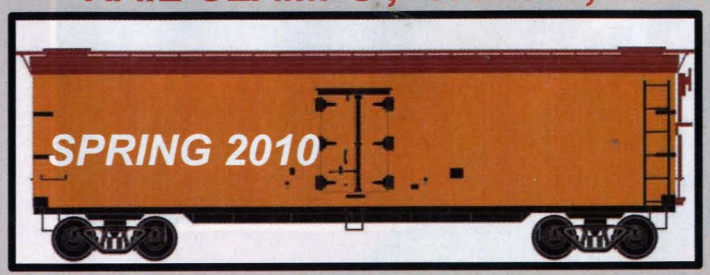


RAIL CLAMPS , TRACK , METAL WHEELS



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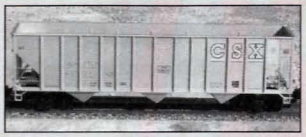

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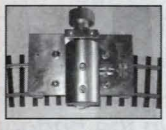

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Holiday Stocking Stuffers

Special Wishes for Santa's List

While every model railroader has a special gift they hope to find under the tree, the editors of **Model Railroad News** *like to offer suggestions for smaller treats suitable for that stocking hung by the chimney with care. We try to be sure these items will fit in a typical stocking though we admit some might be a tad too big for any but the largest sock. We also try to make sure most of these ideas won't strain the budget, making them suitable for giving by younger members of the household and anyone trying to make their holiday resources go as far as possible.*

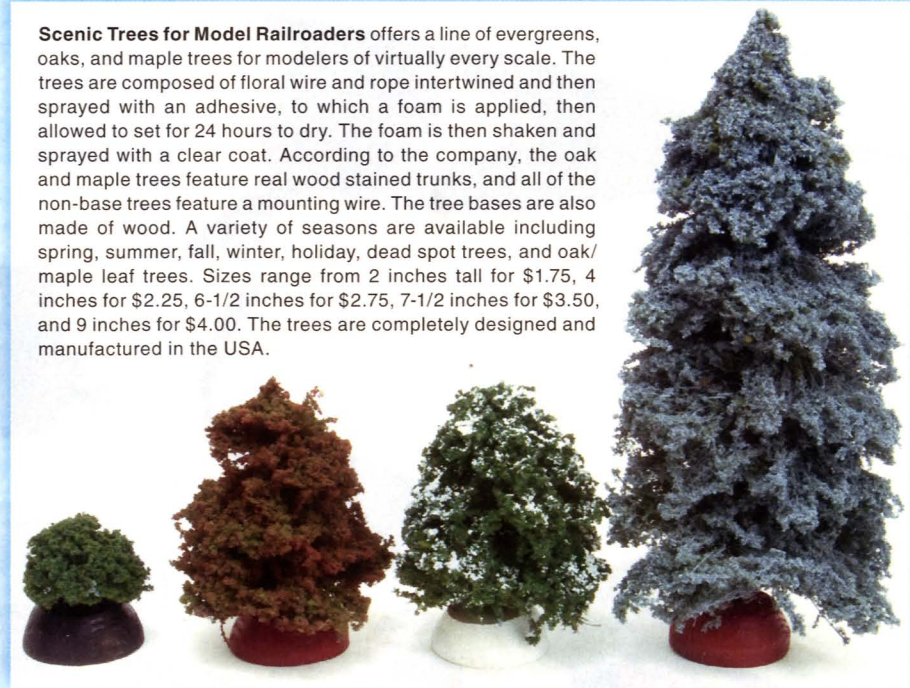
All of the items you'll find among our Stocking Stuffers are products that go with a train set or on a layout. Tools are great gifts that come in handy in more ways than one, and we've found several kits, vehicles, scenery and detail items, and even a few freight cars to help get the creative gift ideas flowing.

You'll find the items we've highlighted and many other great gift ideas as close as your favorite hobby retailer. Contact info for the companies featured is listed at the end of this section.

Best wishes for the holidays from all of us at **Model Railroad News***!*

Reynauld's Euro Imports has a line of HO-scale motorcycles from Artitec in Holland. These models are available in both kits and ready-made models, and come in a variety of colors. The line includes the Famous "US Liberator," the BMW R75, and the Triumph Zivil. The "US Liberator" is also available in a military version. The ready-made models are beautifully painted and fully assembled. The ready-made motorcycles retail for $22.19 each and the kits retail for $7.05.

Scenic Trees for Model Railroaders offers a line of evergreens, oaks, and maple trees for modelers of virtually every scale. The trees are composed of floral wire and rope intertwined and then sprayed with an adhesive, to which a foam is applied, then allowed to set for 24 hours to dry. The foam is then shaken and sprayed with a clear coat. According to the company, the oak and maple trees feature real wood stained trunks, and all of the non-base trees feature a mounting wire. The tree bases are also made of wood. A variety of seasons are available including spring, summer, fall, winter, holiday, dead spot trees, and oak/maple leaf trees. Sizes range from 2 inches tall for $1.75, 4 inches for $2.25, 6-1/2 inches for $2.75, 7-1/2 inches for $3.50, and 9 inches for $4.00. The trees are completely designed and manufactured in the USA.



Motrak Models is offering a new structure kit. The Danielson Building is a commercial structure suitable for most eras for a variety of purposes. The HO-scale kit is composed of laser-cut wood siding (clapboard); laser-cut slate shingles; Tichy lamps, windows, and doors; cast Hydrocal foundation in either stone or concrete; and cast Hydrocal steps. The building (#87702) measures 5-1/2 inches long by 3 inches wide and retails for $45.00.

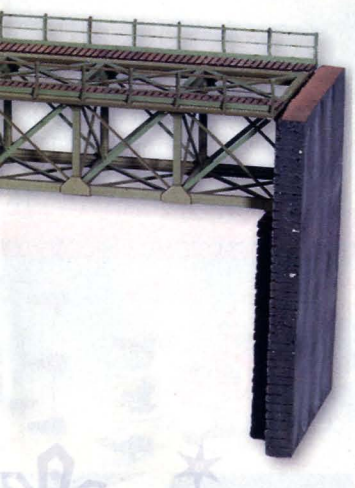
TWH Collectibles 1:50-scale London Seagrave truck is modeled after the new engine #25 of the New London Fire Department in Southeast Connecticut. Each model features a steerable front tractor axle, a pivoting open cab that reveals a detailed engine, functional outriggers, and 360-degree ladder rotation. Other details include accurate hose and wire detail, work and safety lighting, and accurate decal package. The London Seagrave (#094-01151) retails for $289.95.

Dremel offers a large line of tools suitable for any type of hobby. New to their catalog is an Engraver (top) featuring a carbide tip for unhardened glass, soft plastics, leather, and wood, and a diamond tip for engraving and decorating ceramics, hard plastics, metal, and hardened glass. The kit also comes with creative templates to help devise imaginative decorations.The Stylus (center) is a multi-tool that is cordless, small, and lightweight, and comes with a kit of 25 Dremel accessories, and includes storage compartments for project accessories. It is powered by 7.2V lithium-ion technology. The dual-temperature Dremel Glue Gun (bottom) with a large, secure foot and kick stand for extra stability that can be operated with one hand. The kit includes twelve regular Dremel glue sticks and twelve glitter sticks. Prices vary depending on where you purchase these items, but they can be found in most home/hardware stores. Be sure to check with your local hobby retailer as well.

Athearn has released new RTR 50-foot modern tank cars in N scale. The models are fully assembled, feature screw mounted trucks, and come with installed McHenry knuckle couplers. The cars are available in a variety of roadnames and paint schemes such as Santa Fe, RTMX, and PEMEX (shown). The tank cars retail for $14.98 each.

Noch has two new laser-cut bridges available in HO scale. Both bridges are made for overhead tracks and are made from a special laser-cut cardboard. The heads of the bridges are made from high quality structured hard foam. These kits can be assembled with standard glue and are convenient for all HO track systems. For information and pricing, please contact local retailers.

Bar Mills' O-scale Oakleaf Industries kit is a small building complex that includes three structures, to be constructed together or as separate pieces. The kit features a loading dock, white metals castings, and high-grade cardstock cedar shake shingles. This kit can be easily adapted as a waterfront structure by replacing the shorted dock legs with taller pier members. The Oakleaf Industries kit retails for $124.95.



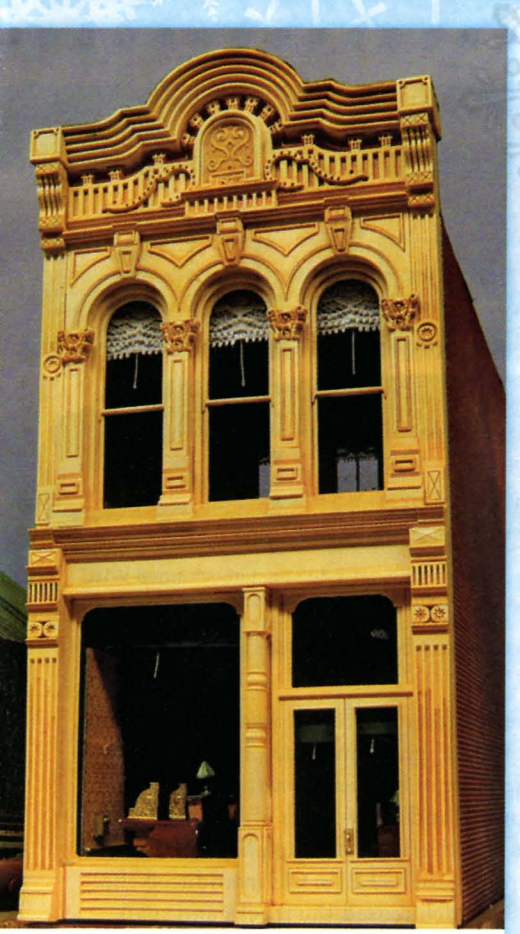
Howard's Hobby has added a new HO-scale truck to their Narragansett Brewery series. This model features the company's Ale logo on both sides of the truck and is available in assorted cab colors and designs. Each truck also includes Rhode Island license plates. The newest Narragansett Brewery Truck (#BT8) retails for $18.00 plus shipping. A line of HO-scale license plates are also available.

Blue Sky Frames has released new evergreen trees custom made to represent the fir, spruce, pine, and hemlock forests for N and HO scales. The trees are being offered as a single tree, in a set of three, and a set of five, and range in size from 4-1/2 to 5 inches tall. Product #5520 consists of one tree for $6.00, Product #5523 consists of three threes for $13.00, and Product #5525 consists of five tress for $20.00. Trees are made to order, please allow up to 7 days for a single order. Multiple orders will require additional time for production and delivery. Shipping is $5.65 for a single tree and $11.05 for orders of three and five. The trees are available by mail order only. Payment can be made as a USPS money order (no personal checks please) or via PayPal (please contact Blue Sky Frames to get e-mail address for PayPal orders).

Ultra Scale, a division of Chooch Enterprises, has released their first two kits in a series of HO-scale building facades. Each design was carefully researched from detailed photos from the late 19th Century and patterned after linen drawings by German architect Carl Darmer. Each façade is

American Limited Models now offers fully operating diaphragm kits for the Rapido Trains HO-scale Super Continental passenger cars. The diaphragms are available for: (#9320) single car kit in gray and (#9330) single car kit in black for $4.95 each, and (#9326) six car pack in gray and (#9336) six car pack in black for $23.95 each. Available in hobby shops.

Every year **USA Trains** offers new Christmas cars to brighten the holidays. This year they've added a Christmas Refrigerator car with operating ice hatches, separately molded handrails, ladders, and corner steps, brass brake



hand-cast in super-detailed resin and features laser-cut 3-ply Bristol board windows and doors and acrylic-plexiglass windowpanes. Only 500 kits in each design will be produced. Each Ultra Scale Building Façade (# 8200 and #8203) retails for $29.99.

The **Norscot** Cat D7E Track-Type Tractor features realistic metal tracks, AccuGrade GPS Grade Control System, detailed lights and other accessories, with authentic paint and decoration. The 1:50 scale replica (#55224) measures 6 inches long and retails for $81.95.

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shaft, operating doors, detailed under body, hook/loop and knuckle couplers, and detailed Archbar trucks. The Large Scale reefer retails for $104.95. Check out the company web site for other holiday-themed cars as well.

REVIEW HO&N

Bachmann springs mighty Centennials on both N and HO worlds

A DDA40X is a big old long thing at 98 feet, 5 inches. Sporting a pair of 3,300 hp, turbocharged V-16, 2-cycle engines, this locomotive remains the highest horsepower and longest diesel locomotive ever built. Big DD and little DD sit side-by-side. Keeping down the price is assisted by careful scale changing in a computer-aided design program. The N-scale version is just 7-3/8 inches across the coupler pulling faces while the HO-scale runs more like 13-1/2 inches.

Review and Photos by John Sipple

N-scale DDA40X, MSRP: $110.00
HO-scale DDA40X, MSRP: $125.00

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OF COURSE, all of the Centennial DDA40X (Bachmann uses the term "DD40AX" should you go on a search of their website) locos were owned only by Union Pacific, so that's the only road-name available. However, we are offered four roadnumbers: 6915, 6927, 6932, and 6943. The HO version has 12-wheel drive and two motors with two flywheels each while the N-scale version runs with 12-wheel drive and a single motor with dual flywheels.

A better truck for a bigger locomotive

Union Pacific survived the Second World War with big steam, but it turned to newer technology after the war. Up first was the awesome Gas Turbine Electric Locomotive (GTEL) from General Electric. It rode on four AAR type B trucks. The front and rear pairs each used a span bolster. This tied the pair of trucks together in line and the center of the span bolster was then king-pinned to the loco frame.

The "Big Blows," as the GTELs were called, performed fairly well, though they burned incredible amounts of bunker C petroleum fuel. In the sixties, the price of bunker C started spiraling upward and a new form of locomotive was needed with the high horsepower offered by the GTELs. GE introduced the U50 which reused the trucks and span bolsters from the GTELs. The problem was space. The two spanned trucks used over 31 feet at each end. GM's Electro Motive Division cooked up a 4-axle Flexicoil D-truck that had a length of just over 23.5 feet. This allowed a much larger fuel tank, and the truck was a superior product.

It first appeared under EMD's DD35 and DD35A models and was the clear choice to go under the new Centennial, which would be a pair of GP40X types combined into a single giant puller. The

This is a powerful HO-scale model that was tested to around 5 ounces of pull, good for perhaps fifty 40-foot cars on the straight and level. With dual skew-wound motors, each with a pair of machined flywheels, this model was born to pull. The giant home plate-like item on the rear walkway is the rear sandbox. The front sand is inside the nose.

Flexi-D trucks proved to be the best solution, helping the DDA40X to have a higher reliability rating. The pair of 3,300 horsepower engines added together to produce 6,600 horses of pulling power. It was also a proving ground for modular electronics.

Numbered from 6900 up, the 47 copies of the Centennial DDA40X entered service and were the most successful of all the twin-engined behemoths. They worked on until mid-1985 when they were finally retired. The best of the pack was saved for the UP Heritage Fleet and a handful of others went to display. The rest were scrapped. They had lasted a decade longer than the U50C models, which suffered cracks in the C-truck sideframes. The EMD Flexicoil D-trucks turned out to be the basis of the loco's success, but the railroad learned a valuable lesson from the Centennials: When one engine or alternator went bad, the whole locomotive rolled into the shop.

Bachmann's DDA40X in both HO- and N-scales

The Philadelphia model train builder is producing the Centennials in both HO- and N-scales, and both are real charmers. Both arrive equipped with DCC decoders, placing them into Bachmann's "DCC-On-Board" line. Customers who are running straight DC won't be disturbed by the DCC board; it operates under DC just about as well as DCC. If you truly don't want the decoder in it, the shell comes off, and the decoder can be replaced by a dummy jumper that's included.

On the outside is a lovely model some 13-1/2 inches long in HO scale and 7-3/8 inches long across the coupler pulling faces in N scale. The prototype is 98 feet, 5 inches long, and that translates in HO to 13-9/16 inches, the minor difference due to couplers and snowplows. The models, like the prototype, reach up to a scale height of 16 feet, 4 inches, so if you have strict Plate C clearances, take care running this model.

I found the paint to be very well done, the mold work crisp and solid, and the level of detail is quite good. Both models are fairly faithful to the prototype and several roadnumbers are offered. I was very pleased with the extra effort they applied to get darkness into the grilles. Fresh from the factory, the Centennial prototypes had those same shadows, but it is a hard detail to master for a model maker. Kudos to Bachmann on this feature.

How do you get something that long around model railroad curves? Some liberties have to be taken. The N-scale version, on the left, uses the swinging pilot often employed on O-gauge models. The HO version, on the right, has a big slot in the pilot and a truck-mounted coupler. With some reluctance, the HO will swing an 18-inch curve, but is far better on 22-inch curves. The N will turn a 9-3/4-inch curve, but also is better on 11 inches. Both scales merit some concern about trackside clearances.

By-The-Numbers

DDA40X
Bachmann
N 1:160 • Type: Diesel
Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
1.3		6.2		21%

Volts	Amps
12	0.17

Analog DC

Start Volts = 5.5

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
5.5	0.07	18.3
6.0	0.08	35.7
10.0	0.12	90.9
15.0	0.14	165.6

DCC

Speed	Step (of 128)	Scale MPH
Min	1%	0.5
Mid	50%	141.0
Top	99%	168.0

By-The-Numbers

DDA40X
Bachmann
HO 1:87 • Type: Diesel
Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
5.0		22.9		21.8%

Volts	Amps
16	0.45

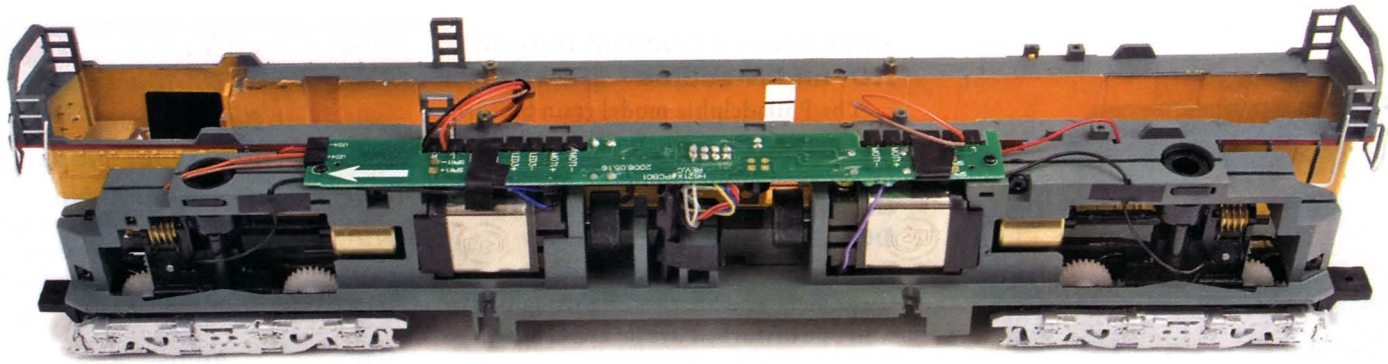
Analog DC

Start Volts = 5

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
5	0.12	7
10	0.13	76
13	0.14	109
16	0.16	150

DCC

Speed	Step (of 128)	Scale MPH
Min	1%	0.5
Mid	50%	144.0
Top	99%	163.0



A look inside the HO model shows us the clever engineering that makes this model such a good puller. The silvery squares are the sides of both motors with shiny brass flywheels on the outside ends but the inside flywheels are painted black so they don't show through the pass-through doorway. The DCC On Board decoders is under the board, right in the middle. I was unable to get into the N-scale version, but really had no need to other than to show the inards.

Operation

Bachmann also has gone to great lengths to make this big thing run on tight curves. On my test layout, I was able to get the HO-scale model to negotiate 18-inch radius curves, though there was some binding and serious overhang issues. On 22-inch radius track, things were much better. To make this possible while pulling freight, Bachmann resorted to truck-mounted couplers and a swing opening in the end plate on each end. While the final result doesn't look like the prototype, it is an acceptable adjustment that makes this model accessible to most HO model railroaders.

The N-scale version uses the swinging pilot often employed on O-gauge models in order to operate curves down to 9-3/4 inches, but it looks better on 11-inch curves. It tested at 1.3 ounces of pull with an efficiency rating of 21 percent, which is good enough for perhaps forty 40-foot cars on the straight and level.

The DCC-On-Board decoder is a relatively primitive item that doesn't provide Control Variables for the operator who wants to tame the 138-smph top speed. It also doesn't provide "silent operation," and so the model has a noticeable AC hum at starting speeds. However, it isn't a large problem to replace the DCCOB decoder with a more sophisticated item. I tried a TCS T1 that fits into the space provided, and it supplies all of the programming tools I customarily enjoy. I quickly had the locomotive humbled into an 85-smph top speed, while it started much more quietly.

It should be noted the DCCOB decoder is a very solid operator that also functions fine in straight DC. Other decoders don't seem to operate the flashing strobe on the top the way the DCCOB decoder does, something else to keep in mind. It also proves that the loco is certified for DCC operation, making the installation of another decoder a more reliable process.

Both scales are good pullers. Each one slips smoothly, a sign the wheels are true, and all wheelsets on both samples were in gauge. Coupler heights of both scales were good but not perfect. I would like to have shown you the inside of the N-scale version, but I could never get it open. I considered using a nutcracker and decided I liked the model in good working order. Beyond showing you what was inside, I had no reason to take off the shell.

Overall Impressions

At the bottom of it, Bachmann has released this run of Centennials on the 40th anniversary of the year they were first released and the 140th of the Golden Spike. This is a quality model with authentic detail plus excellent paint and decoration. With dual motors, four flywheels, and DCC On Board, this model pulls very well. With a choice of both an HO and an N version, chances are you'll take one home.

This nose-to-nose shot helps to illustrate the Flexicoil D truck sideframes. This four-axled truck is the reason the EMD product outlasted the competition by a decade, and in the model, it supplies four-axle power combined with eight-wheel electrical pickup to give each scale version a broad power wheelbase.

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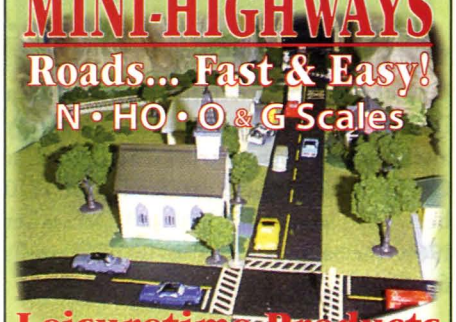

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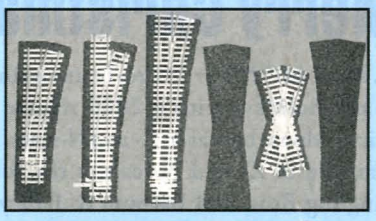

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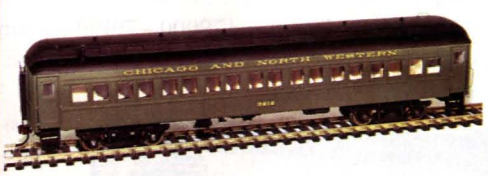

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HR4037 - 60' Coach CNW, single car
HR4038 - 60' Baggage CNW, single car

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Merry Christmas from Micro-Mouse

Z, N, & HON3 — Micro-Trains is ringing in the holidays with a 2009 release of a Micro-Mouse boxcar in Z- and N-scale. Also available in Z- and N-scale is the fourth Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey billboard car. Available in Z-scale are five 40-foot standard boxcars, two 60-foot flat cars, and a passenger baggage car. In N-scale is a 60-foot railway post office car, a 36-foot wood-sheathed ice reefer, three 40-foot standard boxcars, a bay window caboose, a two-bay Centerflow covered hopper, and a 61-foot bulkhead flat car. A 30-foot gondola with load is available for HOn3-scale.

N & Z scale

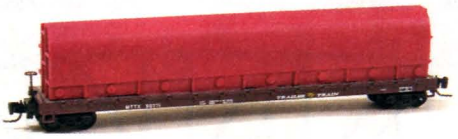
MTL's old friend Micro-Mouse is once again center stage, sledding down the slope on this year's colorful Excess Height Christmas boxcar. Never one for the conventional, the daring holiday mouse has converted an old tennis shoe into a slope shredder. The holiday greeting with the Micro-Mouse signature will prove this car to be a holiday classic. The car is numbered MTL 2009. The boxcar retails for $24.80 for Z-scale (#507 00 420) or $23.40 (#102 00 100) for N-scale.

A wood-sheathed car has been released for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey. Billboard car #4 is painted brown and features a colorful representation of an actual Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey poster. This poster depicts acrobatic and aerial acts performed by over 200 women. These acts would include extraordinary feats of balance, wonderful mid-air performances, and many other agility routines. The car retails for $29.95 for Z-scale (#515 00 604) or $25.95 for N-scale (#047 00 404).

Z scale

Two 40-foot standard boxcars with double doors have been released for Great Northern. Boxcars 15460 and 15466 are painted vermillion red with black roofs and ends. They bear the white "Rocky" logos and are lettered in white. They were built in March 1940, serviced in April 1963 and run on Bettendorf trucks. Originally built for the Erie-Lackawanna in March 1940, the cars were part of the 78500 – 78999 and 79000 – 79199 series. The boxcars (#501 00 131 & #501 00 132) retail for $29.15 each.

A 40-foot standard boxcar with plug door has been released for Wyoming State. Boxcar WY 1890 is the seventeenth car of a 50-car series representing each of the 50 states in the union. It bears the Western Meadowlark and Indian Paintbrush, Wyoming's official state bird and flower. The flag of the state of Wyoming is in the background. The road-number, 1890, represents the year the 'Equality State' was admitted into the union. The boxcar (#502 00 517) retails for $22.95.

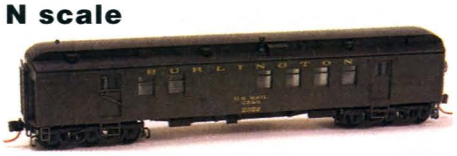


Two 60-foot flat cars with loads have been released for Trailer Train. Flat cars TTX 90771 and 90777 are painted brown with yellow 'TT' logos and white lettering. They were built in November 1975 and run on Roller Bearing trucks. TTX Company provides railcars and related freight car management services to the North American rail industry. Pooled railcars are for service in the intermodal, automotive, lumber, machinery, building materials, steel, and other commodity groups where flat cars, boxcars, and gondolas are required. The flat cars (#524 00 051 & #524 00 052) retail for $21.70 each.

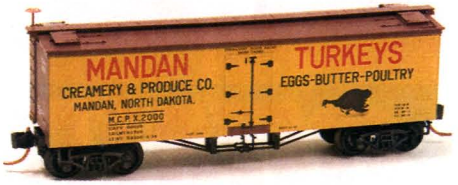
A passenger baggage car has been released for Southern Pacific. SP 6637 is painted dark

gray with light gray lettering. It was built in December 1959 by St. Louis Car Company and runs on passenger trucks. St. Louis Car Co. built 50 baggage cars under lot 1810 between December 1959 and December 1960. The baggage car (#553 00 075) retails for $26.60.

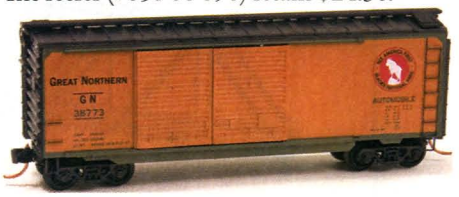
N scale



A 60-foot railway post office car has been released for Burlington. CB&Q 2322 is painted Pullman Green with a gold herald and lettering. It was built in October 1917 by American Car & Foundry and runs on passenger trucks. The Burlington had at least 20 of these Railway Post Office cars in number series 2305 – 2324. Number 2322 was built by American Car & Foundry Company in October of 1917. The post office car (#140 00 030) retails for $20.90.



A 36-foot wood-sheathed ice reefer with truss rod underframe has been released for Mandan Creamery & Produce Co. MCPX 2000 is painted with reefer yellow sides and brown roof and ends. It is lettered in black and red with a black turkey silhouette. It was built in November 1927 by the Pressed Steel Car Co., serviced in April 1934 and runs on Bettendorf trucks. The Mandan Creamery & Produce Company of Mandan, ND, also leased NAC cars under its own MCPX reporting marks. MCPX 2000 was assigned to Mandan for a brief period beginning in April 1934. Billboard car side advertising was extensively used by meat packers, breweries, and producers of food products from the 1920s through 1938. The reefer (#058 00 090) retails $24.30.



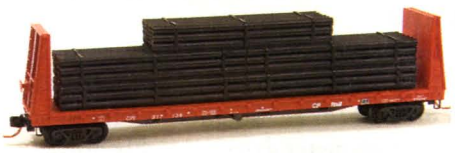
Two 40-foot standard boxcars with double doors have been released for Great Northern. GN 38773 and GN 38780 are painted

Omaha Orange with Pullman Green side trim, and black ends and roof. Lettering is black and Pullman Green. The pair was built in October 1947 and run on Roller Bearing trucks. This paint scheme has the 54-inch herald "See America First – Glacier National Park." Upon repainting, they received the following era-specific paint schemes: Standard post-1947 all mineral red scheme with a white stripe on each right hand door; after 1956 they received the vermillion red scheme; and in 1967 some received the "Big Sky" lettering scheme. The boxcars (#023 00 311 & #023 00 312) retail for $25.65 each.

A bay window caboose is available for Penn Central. PC 18434 is painted Penn Central green with a black roof and a white logo and lettering. It was built in January 1946, serviced in November 1969 and runs on Swing-Motion caboose trucks. Originating on the Southern Railroad as Southern 3126, it was acquired by Penn Central and repainted in its final PC scheme in November 1969. The caboose (#130 00 050) retails for $25.40.

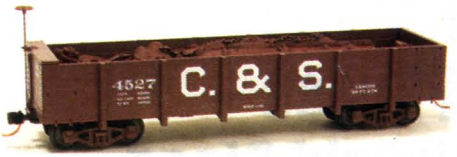
A 40-foot standard boxcar with plug door and no roofwalk is the fifteenth car of a 44-car series representing each of the presidents of the United States. Boxcar 1845 – 1849 bears the portrait of our 11th president, James K. Polk. The car comes with a commemorative pin replicated from that era. Committed to geographic expansion, Polk was responsible for the second-largest expansion of the nation's territory by securing the Oregon Territory. He then purchased 525,000 square miles in the southwest through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo that ended the Mexican-American War. The boxcar (#074 00 115) retails for $23.95.

A two-bay Centerflow covered hopper is available for Chesapeake & Ohio. C&O 605556 is painted yellow with a dark blue sill, logo, and lettering. It was built in June 1976 by American Car & Foundry in Huntington, WV, and runs on Barber Roller Bearing trucks. This ACF Center Flow design is more compact in design than the cylindrical car style. They have a LO classification, four 30-inch round hatches and two gravity outlets, a 2,700 cubic foot capacity and an interior length of 32-foot 1-inches. The hopper (#092 00 160) retails for $27.55.



A 61-foot bulkhead flat car has been released for CP Rail. CPI 317138 is painted red with a white logo and lettering. It was built in November 1973 by Marine Industries Limited of Sorel, Quebec, serviced in Ontario in September 1987, and runs on Roller Bearing trucks. The reporting mark 'CPI' indicates these cars are restricted to international service only and are not to be loaded for domestic points. The cars were leased from North American Car Company by CP Rail. The flat car (#054 00 070) retails for $24.15.

HOn3



A 30-foot gondola with steam engine scrap load is available for Colorado & Southern. C&S 4527 is painted boxcar red with white logo and lettering. It was built in 1910 and runs on Bettendorf trucks. Commonly called coal cars, they were actually used for hauling ore, scrap iron, lumber, and ballast as well. The series 4498 – 4547, of which this car is a member, was the first group of steel-framed gondolas built by the Colorado & Southern. Many of these gondolas were later converted to flat cars and continued to be usable for several more years. The gondola (#860 00 060) retails for $41.60.

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REVIEW HO

A Brass – Hybrid Steed

The Mohawk from Broadway Limited Imports

The New York Central's L 4 class Mohawk as recreated in HO-scale by Broadway Limited Imports. It's a breed apart from other HO-scale steam locomotive models with its brass-hybrid construction. At 15 inches long and almost 2 pounds in weight, the engine and tender duo is a real handful, but still can negotiate tight 22-inch radius curves. BLI is offering both decorated models as well as painted, but unlettered and unpainted versions. The sample before you represents an L4b with Laird-type multiple-bearing crossheads and Scullin Disc drivers, the former unique to the L4b subclass and the latter only found on five of the 25 L4bs constructed.

Review and Photos by David Otte

BLI-1287 NYC L-4b Mohawk #3149, MSRP: $450.00

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www.broadway-limited.com

By-The-Numbers

4-8-2 L4b
Broadway Limited Imports
HO 1:87 • Type: Steam
Traction Tires? No

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
4.1		21.5		19.1%

Volts	Amps
12	0.45

Analog DC

Start Volts = 4.0

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
8.7	0.12	2.2
10.0	0.14	5.9
10.5	0.18	21.0
11.0	0.21	34.7
11.5	0.24	50.0
12.0	0.29	72.6

DCC

Speed	Step (of 128)	Scale MPH
Min	3	2.1
Mid	64	31.6
Top	128	67.7

HAVING seen some of the latest prices on brass model imports, the HO scale collector/operator has to appreciate the efforts Broadway Limited has been making with their reasonably priced line of brass-hybrid locomotives. For not much more than the going rate of a comparable DCC/DC-sound equipped, high-end detailed plastic steamer, BLI hybrids feature practically 100 percent brass construction with QSI's well-regarded Quantum Sound System. We have already witnessed the success of these hybrids in the form of the company's New Haven I-5 Hudson and the Union Pacific TTT Class 2-10-2. Now, New York Central fans get a taste of this modeling medium phenomenon with BLI's new L-4a/4b Mohawks.

Mountains on the Water Level Route

In 1916, the NYC took delivery of its first 4-8-2, more commonly branded on other roads as "Mountains." Its eight 69-inch diameter drivers quickly proved that the 4-8-2 was equally at home pulling fast freights as it was working on mountain-bound passenger trains and the railroad soon had 185 4-8-2s on their roster classed as L1a, L1b, L1c, and L1d by the time the country entered the First World War. The L class became known as Mohawks after the name of the NYC division on which the first NYC 4-8-2 was tested. An additional 300 Mohawks, classed L2a – L2d were delivered by early 1930.

As the country began to emerge from the Great Depression, the NYC once again felt the need for additional fast freight motive power, but this time with the potential use as backup passenger power too. This resulted in the delivery of 50 new L3 class 4-8-2s in late 1940 and early 1941. As the war in Europe got under way and eventually our own involvement brought increased traffic at home, the L3 class was further bolstered with fifteen L3c freight-only locomotives in 1942.

All the L3 class locomotives featured a 250 pound boiler pressure, 25-1/2-inch x 30-inch cylinders, lightweight reciprocating parts, dynamic counterbalancing, Baker valve gear, and 69-inch drivers either of the Boxpok or Union Web Spoke design with spacing so that they could easily be swapped out with 72-inch drivers if the need arose. Combined, the characteristics of the newer design provided an almost 25 percent increase in drawbar horsepower over the older L2 class.

The climax of the Mohawk class, though, and the subject of the BLI models, were the 25 L4a (numbered 3100 – 3124) and 25 L4b (3125 – 3149) engines constructed by Lima in 1942 – 1943. They followed more closely to the fast freight – passenger service design of the L3a engines, but with the use of 72-inch diameter drivers of either Boxpok or Scullin Disc design and larger 26-inch x 30-inch cylinders being the major exceptions. Furthermore, the L4b class received multiple-bearing crossheads and their tenders were modified with even higher-speed-rated water scoops. Later, the L4s, as well as the L3s, were outfitted with smoke deflectors further distinguishing their muscular and more modern appearance.

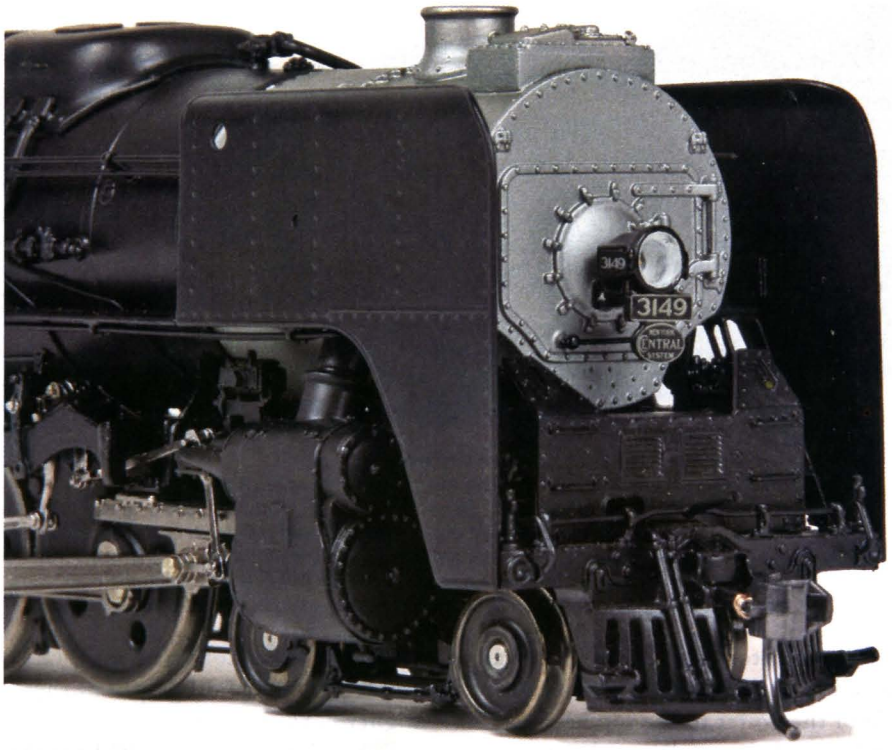
The dual-service nature of the L3a and L4 classes in particular proved their worth to the NYC during the following war years, racking up thousands of miles hauling troop trains. Once only used on the NYC proper, the Mohawk class would eventually see service on many of the NYC's subsidiary lines especially after dieselization began. Doomed by the diesel-electric technology, the remnants of the class would make their last stand in late 1956 working the system's west end. Of the 600 total Mohawks once owned by the NYC, the largest group of 4-8-2s on any single US railroad, only two survive today as static remembrances of these once proud steeds.

The Broadway Limited Mohawk

Just as I did with BLI's UP 2-10-2 release, upon removing this new model from its packaging, I found myself staring quietly at it taking in all the fine details while it sat motionless on an eye level section of test track. The model was breathtaking to observe and the phrase "museum quality" came to mind. With both feet firmly back on the ground, I returned to the task at hand and began to check our sample, L4b number 3149, for the first category in our review process — accuracy.

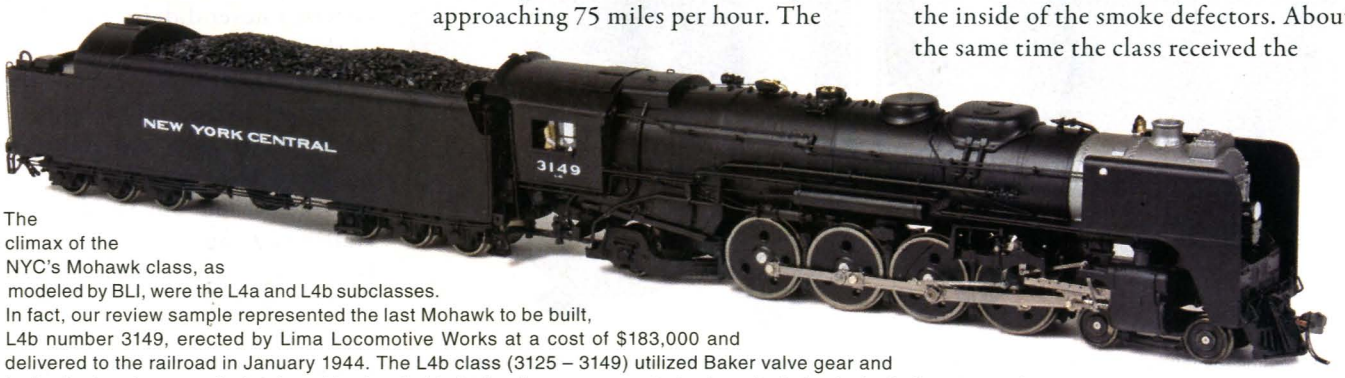
Comparing it to published data and as many photographs as I could lay my hands on, I found all the general dimensions of the BLI Mohawk to be correctly reproduced including properly spaced scale 72-inch diameter drivers, the appropriate tender wheelbase, cab width, overall height and, well, you get the picture. The manufacturer did a pretty solid job of adhering to the prototype save one measurement — the lead truck wheelbase was a scale 5 inches too long. Based on the rest of the model, my guess would be that this discrepancy is probably a necessity due to the limits of HO-gauge track geometry and the model's minimum 22-inch radius requirements. Nonetheless, I doubt most modelers would notice this slight exaggeration.

While I could go on and list the many wonderful general details of this miniature Mohawk, both fashioned within the brass tender and boiler/cab shells and those separately applied, let's go over the list of L4b attributes and, even more specifically, how our sample measures up to the actual 3149. As mentioned earlier, two big differences between the L4a and L4b were the later class' use of multiple-bearing crossheads and tenders equipped with high-speed water scoops. Our L4b correctly displays Laird type crossheads and its tender boasts the very visible curved top expansion or surge tank behind its slope sheet, which allowed these locomotives to scoop water from the troughs between the rails at speeds approaching 75 miles per hour. The model's cab also displays the slight taper inward to the rear of the engine that the prototypes exhibited.



The practically 100 percent brass constructed BLI model has details galore with separately applied hand rails, coupler lift bar, train line air hose, LED illuminated headlight, and all the steam, sand, water, electrical, and air lines visible on the prototype. Take special note of the photo-etched number plate and NYC herald beneath the headlight. Also depicted appropriately are the rectangular-shaped Worthington SA feedwater heater atop the smokebox, compound air pumps behind the pilot deck shield (appropriately outfitted for 3149 with louvered vent openings), and see-through passenger-style pilot. Both the L3 and L4 classes were equipped with drop couplers, but BLI has provided a fixed Kadee magnetic knuckle coupler allowing the modeler to double-head their Mohawks.

Continuing down the checklist, the BLI L4b comes outfitted with smoke deflectors, which were applied to these locomotives during late 1945 or early 1946. When they were installed, a steel fabricated shield with one of two different styles of vent openings was placed on the pilot deck to protect the air pumps and, in most cases, the handrails extending down from the smokebox beside the access steps to the pilot deck were removed in favor of handrail mounted to the inside of the smoke defectors. About the same time the class received the



The climax of the NYC's Mohawk class, as modeled by BLI, were the L4a and L4b subclasses. In fact, our review sample represented the last Mohawk to be built, L4b number 3149, erected by Lima Locomotive Works at a cost of $183,000 and delivered to the railroad in January 1944. The L4b class (3125 – 3149) utilized Baker valve gear and had roller bearings on all wheels making it suitable for hauling passenger trains in a pinch, but lacked a booster engine on the trailing truck as found on its freight only L3b and L3c brothers. Total weight on drivers amounted to 401,000 pounds aiding these locomotives in achieving their rated 59,000 pound tractive effort. Details are correct for the HO-scale 3149 from the time the prototype received its smoke deflectors, boiler top mounted check valve, and repositioned sand dome just following World War Two until its retirement late in 1956.

The 9.8-ounce brass tender teamed up with the HO-scale Mohawk is equally well detailed with real coal load, separately applied ladder and stirrup steps, add-on handrail, steam and air lines, operating backup light, and coupler lift bar. Also note the Kadee knuckle coupler and the water fill hatch on the deck that allows access to the volume control. Equally visible on the deck are the curved top of the surge tank, which was unique to the as-built L4b tenders, allowing them to scoop water from a trough between the rails at an incredible 75 miles per hour, and the square box that housed the Train Control equipment. Finally, note the stoker access hatch on the side of the tender beneath the lettering.

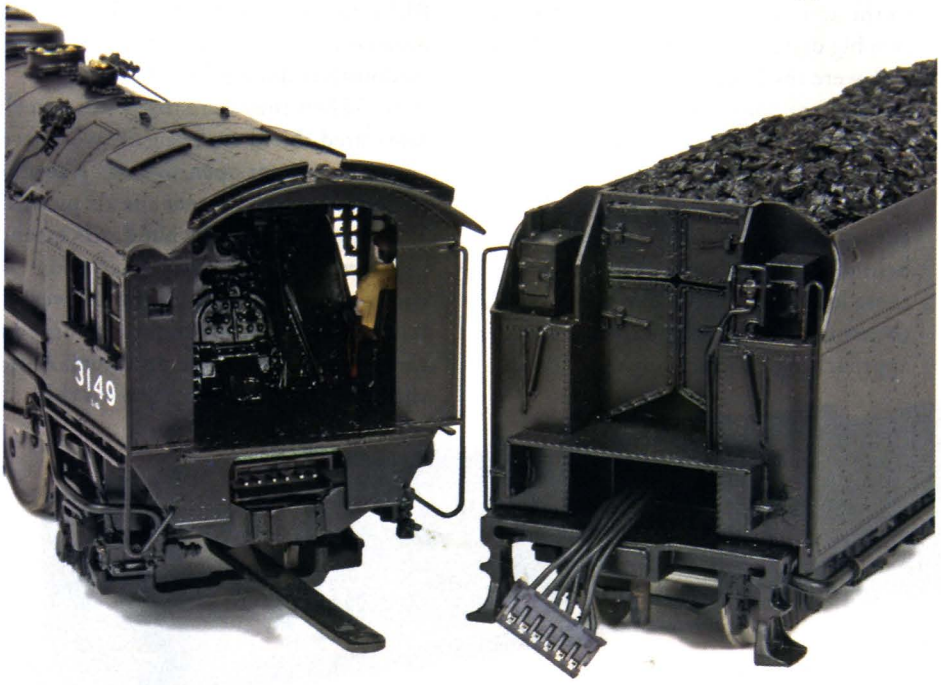
smoke deflectors, the check valve was moved from its location on the right side of the boiler to the top between the bell and the sandbox subsequently causing the sand dome and its associated sanding lines to be moved further back on the boiler toward the steam dome. Overall, BLI has done an excellent job of carrying out almost all of these distinctive characteristics right down to the small access holes, which were visible in most of the L4's deflectors. However, BLI did neglect to model the handrail on the inside of the smoke deflectors, which is plainly visible in many photographs of these mighty NYC steamers.

While I have to knock BLI for this omission, I must also applaud their efforts to provide roadnumber-specific details. The 3149 was one of only five L4bs to receive Scullin Disc drivers and our review sample follows suit. Likewise, the HO-scale replica has the louvered style (as opposed to the screen type) vents on its air pump shield just like the real 3149. Outstanding!

More accolades for the appearance of this model must be given as well for the high quality fit and finish found on our sample. The satin-black paint was ultra-smooth, the white lettering opaque and sharp, and the photo-etched number plate and NYC herald mounted beneath the headlight are a nice bonus detail, although I found the graphite-colored smokebox to be a bit bright for my own tastes.

Like the 2-10-2 that came before her, the Mohawk includes a precision, flywheel-equipped 5-pole can motor that powers the third axle via a U-joint drive shaft. The rest of the drivers are powered through the connecting side rods. All drivers are flanged and the axles are sprung with some lateral motion available, too, so maneuvering the 15-inch long engine and tender duo through the 22-inch radius curves on our test layout wasn't an issue in the least. However, the trailing truck had a tendency to derail when the engine was traveling in reverse through these tight curves; I never did discover the reason of this occasional nuisance.

Both the drivers as well as the wheels on one side of each tender truck act as electrical pickups, allowing our model to move through turnouts and the like without any incidences of stalling during test runs. The tender is connected to the engine by way of a traditional flat drawbar outfitted with two holes, the closest to the end required for those 22-inch radius curves. With the electronics all housed in the tender, a 6-pin electrical connector and wire harness easily plugs into the



Connecting the tender to the locomotive is straightforward. A wiring harness with 6-pin micro plug coming from the tender pushes into the receptacle beneath the hinged tender apron on the engine with the pin under the tender placed in one of two holes on the metal drawbar, which is fastened to a pivot point on the frame beneath the firebox. Note also the interior details of the backhead and the hand-painted crew figures, as well as the separately applied hand grabs along the coal bunker doors on the front of the tender.

receptacle beneath the hinged tender apron. The Mohawk is also outfitted with directionally controlled yellow-colored LED headlight and tender backup light plus cab interior lighting to show off those hand painted engineer and fireman figures seated inside. Furthermore, all wheels on our sample were properly gauged when checked with an NMRA HO Standards Gauge and the flanges appeared to meet RP25 specifications performing as advertised on my various test tracks down to code 70 rail.

Operation of the 4-8-2 straight from the box yielded a bit of gear noise, but nothing some additional lubrication per the model's instruction booklet didn't remedy. As the By-The-Number shows, the BLI sample had her lowest consistent operating speed register at a very respectable 2 scale miles per hour with an average maximum speed attained at about 70 miles per hour as appropriate for the L4 class. Although the engine lacks traction tires, its 1-pound, 5.5-ounce weight provided about an average tractive effort for a locomotive of this size. On level track with 36-inch radius curves, our review sample had no problem pulling a freight consist of 32 modern-era production cars. On a 2 percent grade and maintaining the 36-inch radius curves, the Mohawk could still handle 18 of these cars before wheel slippage occurred. Finally, the Metal Kadee couplers, which are mounted on both the tender and engine pilot, were positioned within set NMRA tolerances.

As usual, the Mohawk's onboard Quantum DCC motor and sound decoder worked flawlessly when tested under the command of a Digitrax Zephyr system and the realistic audio coming from the twin speakers in the floor of the tender, which included engine chuff, bell, whistle, air pumps, cylinder cocks, water injector, coupler clash, squealing brakes, and so on, only added to the model's authenticity. And don't fret if you're currently not into command control. QSI's sound system works in Analog DC too, and such operations can be further enhanced via the separately sold Quantum Engineer remote control panel that adds direct access to all of these great sound functions to any conventional power pack. Either way, the operator of this new brass-hybrid is going to enjoy the sounds almost as much as they will admire how it looks pulling a fast freight on their layout.

Final Thoughts

If I were strictly a collector of finely crafted brass model trains, would BLI's Mohawk meet my expectations? You bet! This model actually exceeds some of the pieces in one of my model railroader colleague's extensive brass model collection, which commanded much greater prices when originally released and lack command control and sound to boot. Of course, these BLI models are really meant to be enjoyed by the operator and, for you NYC fans out there, these brass-hybrid steeds are a must have!

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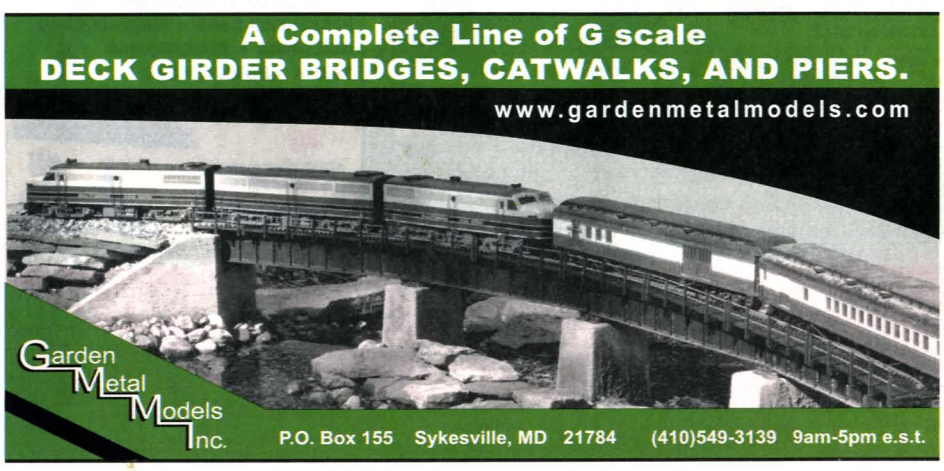
Intermountain expands hopper and passenger fleets

N — Intermountain has released five cylindrical covered hoppers and seven 18-room roomettes cars this month. The fully assembled cars are available in a variety of roadnumbers to allow modelers build uniquely numbered fleets.

Five cylindrical covered hoppers have been released equipped with etched metal roof walks and Micro-Trains trucks and couplers. The first car, Alberta (#65117) is painted blue with yellow lettering for ALNX. It is decorated with the "Take An Alberta Break" slogan encouraging tourists to visit different locations. It is available for roadnumbers: 396015 "St. Albert," 396051 "Valleyview," 396055 "Mclennan," 396127 "M.D. of Provost," 396162 "Caroline," and 396302 "Big Valley." The second car, Alberta (#65118) is also painted blue with yellow lettering for ALPX and the "Take An Alberta Break" slogan encouraging tourists to visit different locations. It is available for roadnumbers: 628074 "Milk River," 628095 "Birch Cove," 628110 "Innisfree," 628320 "Acme," 628385 "Wetaskiwin," and 628438 "County of Lac Ste. Anne." The third car, Canadian National (#65125) Government of Canada – Branchline is silver and yellow. The lettering and logos are salmon colored. The hopper is available for roadnumbers 106438, 106627, 107104, 107536, 108189, and 108245. The fourth car, Ferrocarril Del Pacifico (#65132) is painted light green with safety yellow grab irons. It is available for roadnumbers 21013, 21058, 21149, 21226, 21274, and 21395. The last car, CNIS (#65133) is painted a very light gray color with red lettering. It is available for roadnumbers 379260, 379292, 379347, 379348, 379389, and 379491. The hoppers retail for $21.95 each.

Seven 18-room roomettes are now available new and re-tooled complete with Micro-Trains trucks and couplers, and interior details and lighting. The first, Pennsylvania Railroad (#CSS6880) is painted the two-tone Tuscan colors of the *Fleet of Modernism* with gold lettering and striping. It is available for roadnames "City of Philadelphia," "City of Washington," "City of Youngtown," and "City of Lancaster." The second car, New York Central (#CCS6881) is painted in the post war NYC scheme. The window band is the light gray with dark gray above and below. The roof is black and lettering is white. It is available for roadnames "City of Troy," "City of Yonkers," "City of Schenectady," and "City of Utica." The third car, New York Central (#CCS6882) is decorated in the *20th Century Limited* two-tone gray scheme with the narrow striping in the window band and black roof. The striping is silver. It is available for roadnames: "City of Peoria," "City of Poughkeepsie," "City of South Bend," and "City of Syracuse." The fourth, Illinois Central (#CCS6883) is painted dark brown and orange with yellow striping and lettering. It is available for roadnames "City of Jackson," and "City of New Orleans." The fifth car, Pennsylvania (#CCS6884) is decorated in the Pennsy Tuscan colors with a black roof and yellow lettering. It is available for roadnames "City of Canton," "City of Erie," "City of Reading," and "City of Terre Haute." The sixth car, Pennsylvania Railroad (#CCS6885) is painted yellow and gray with red lettering and stripes for joint service to the west coast. It is available for "City of Harrisburg," "City of Louisville," "City of Norfolk," and "City of Trenton." The seventh car, Nickel Plate Road (#CCS6886) is painted silver and dark blue with dark blue lettering for "Robert De La Salle," and "Moses Cleveland." The 18-room roomettes retail for $39.95 each.

Intermountain Railway Co., P.O. Box 839, Longmont, CO 80502-0839; 303-772-1901; Fax: 303-772-8534; E-mail: intermountain@intermountain-railway.com; www.intermountain-railway.com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REVIEW O

The Trainman Delivers a New U-Boat to O-Gauge Fans

Atlas O has accurately decorated our U23B sample for Santa Fe number 6338, which was one of 49 units (6300 – 6348) delivered to the road between June 1970 and February 1971. Originally painted in the road's blue and yellow stripe scheme, the U23Bs began being repainted into the newly adopted Freight Warbonnet scheme when the locomotives were shopped for service starting in late 1972. While some units were retired as early as 1985, 6338 was still on the roster in 1988, albeit in storage, when the balance of the four-axle U-boats were returned to GE for use in the company's Dash 7 rebuild program.

Review and Photos by David Otte

3-rail TMCC, MSRP: $399.95
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THANKS to the Trainman, O gaugers can now enjoy the sights and sounds of General Electric's best-selling four-axle U-boat: the U23B. Atlas O has added this model to their mid-price-level Trainman product line where scale dimensions, detail, and accuracy are still the number one priority. Whether you're a Hi-railer or strictly adhere to 2-rail track, the new U-boat is being decorated for a number of original purchasers of the 2,250 horsepower GE diesel-electric each with two different roadnumbers: Missouri-Kansas-Texas, Missouri Pacific, Lehigh Valley, Delaware & Hudson (both in standard colors and the Bicentennial-era "Spirit of Freedom"), Santa Fe, Conrail, and Louisville & Nashville.

GE's U23B

Although there had existed a high horsepower race among the builders Electro-Motive, GE, and the American Locomotive Company throughout the 1960s, the big Class 1 railroads soon realized that the 3,000 to 3,600 horsepower mainline locomotives they had been purchasing did not necessarily meet all their needs. What they also required was a more cost-effective diesel-electric that could handle the smaller consists and branchline duties that the previous generation cab units and road switchers, which were now reaching retirement age, had been fulfilling. Both EMD and Alco had been trying to convince the railroads of this very need back in the mid 1960s with their respective introductions of the four-axle, 2,000 horsepower GP38 and C420 models, but it wasn't until later in the decade that the Class 1s caught on to the idea.

Seeing this growing trend and not wishing to be left out of the potential cash pie, GE launched their medium horsepower entry in 1968. The U23B, in order to remain as efficient and affordable as possible in terms of both initial purchase price and maintenance costs, borrowed much from its U-boat brethren. The platform on which the new model was built was the same one used on the higher horsepower U28B, U30B, U33B, and U36Bs. It also utilized much of their internal mechanical/electrical equipment, not to mention a turbocharged 12-cylinder version of GE's well-regarded FDL prime mover, which provided a 250-horsepower edge over its competition while using four fewer cylinders, further reducing fuel consumption. Available with either a direct current or alternating current main generator, GE's 752E series traction motors, and optional dynamic braking, the minimum 242,000 pound U23B could produce 60,400 pounds of continuous tractive effort — 5,700 pounds more than the slightly heavier EMD GP38.

Despite the rather encouraging statistics, the U23B lagged behind its main competition in sales almost 2 to 1 (5 to 1 when including the Dash 2 version of the GP38) with only 481 units delivered. A total of 17 different customers purchased the locomotive during its nine-year production run starting with the

A total of 481 U23Bs (including 56 for foreign markets) were built by GE during a 9-year production period commencing in 1968. Visually, the new Atlas O Trainman U-boat is a perfect match for a mid-to-late Phase II-era prototype and the model's dimensions scale out to match the U23Bs published data, too. Almost identical externally to its higher horsepower U30B brother, railfans can distinguish the two apart by counting the tall engine access doors in the center of the long hood: six doors or one for each cylinder of the U23B's V12 and eight doors for the U30B's V16 prime mover. With its all-wheel drive, relatively short wheelbase, and robust construction, this O-gauge locomotive is perfect for smaller O36 diameter (36 inch radius for 2-rail) curve equipped pikes.

Delaware & Hudson order for 16 units in September of 1968 and culminating with an order for ten by Conrail in June of 1977 — the last of the U-boat product line to be built by GE. The L&N owned the largest fleet of U23Bs with 90 on their roster with Penn Central, Southern, the only purchasers of the high short hood variant, and the Santa Fe following suit. An additional 40 U23Bs were sent to Mexico and 16 were exported to Peru. As far as I could determine, all of these four-axle U-boats have been purged from the Class 1 rosters. In most cases, the units were sold to secondary and industrial roads, scrapped, or sold back to GE for its Dash 7 refurbishment program in the late 1980s.

Despite its Trainman designation, the O-gauge U23B includes a number of add-on detail parts. Even more impressive are the AAR Type B trucks on which our sample rode. They are not only correct for the Santa Fe units, but display Master line level details. Also found under the prototypes were GE's new floating bolster FB-2 trucks and on occasion EMD Blomberg trucks received as trade-in equipment from the purchasing railroad. Atlas O has promised to follow suit supplying the appropriate truck for the decorated model.

The Trainman U23B

Atlas O has become so consistent in their O-gauge Trainman offerings that it's easy to assume even before a newly announced model is released, the product is going to be fantastic. Well, the U23B doesn't disappoint! Take our sample decorated for Santa Fe number 6338 for instance. On an initial inspection of the model, its well-rendered plastic carbody features excellent molded-in details, which are further enhanced by its perfectly executed post-1972 blue-and-yellow Warbonnet paint scheme.

While the model doesn't have the see-through photo-etched metal grilles and some of the other more delicate-appearing details of the company's pricier Master Line locomotives, there is still a good helping of separately applied parts. These include wire hand grabs, metal railing and stanchions, cab sunshades, brass air horns, coupler lift bars, end platform safety chains, bell, handbrake wheel, diecast metal fuel tank, and plastic air reservoir tanks. They've even gone so far as to add front and rear snowplows to the diecast metal pilots appropriate for the Santa Fe U23Bs. Certainly, no one can complain about the diecast metal ARR Type B road trucks on which our sample rode, as they have to be straight from the Master Line roster with their add-on air and sanding lines, brake cylinders, metal springs, roller bearing journal boxes, and blackened 40-scale-inch-diameter wheels.

As far as I could determine, no short cuts have been taken in the accuracy of this 14-inch long (over the pilots) U-boat replica. My measurements taken of the length of the model over its pilots, between truck centers, the truck's wheelbase, and overall height and width matched those dimensions found in published drawings of the prototype. Likewise, all the various access doors and hatches are present, too, each displaying hinge and latch details along with body panel lines and a raised tread pattern on the walkway platforms. In fact, the model is a perfect match for a mid to late Phase II U23B with its folded, fan-like, protruding car side grilles, the lack of a horizontal rib along the upper sides of the radiator shroud, flat steel plate pilot with extended end platforms, and a fully recessed inside corner step handrail area.

Finally, the position of the single engine air intake filter, which is situated at the front sides of the radiator section of the carbody, is in the low position on the Trainman model where as the early built units had them located high on the sides. Choosing this particular production variant was a smart move on Atlas O's part as the bulk of U23Bs produced included most of these external details.

On the Test Track

Under the hood of our Santa Fe U-boat are the standard mechanicals and electronics of an Atlas O diesel locomotive mounted atop a rigid stamped steel chassis. Flywheel-equipped can motors are vertically mounted to the metal gearboxes on each truck, which in turn have their inside axle wheels outfitted with traction tires all together providing this four-pound, four-ounce O-gauge model with ample traction for hauling two dozen or more scale-sized freight cars with ease.

Along with its standard directional LED lighting, our unit included TMCC and RailSounds 4.0. Via command control with Lionel's TMCC CAB-1 remote, the Santa Fe U23B (without load) had a consistent low speed of 7.6 scale miles per hour and a maximum breakneck speed of 92.2 scale miles per hour — about 20 scale miles per hour faster than the typical U23B was capable of moving. Operation was smooth and everything worked as advertised.

With the TMCC CAB-1, the operator has access to activating the many familiar audio effects of the RailSounds system (horn, bell, squealing brakes, GE prime mover diesel roar, CrewTalk, etc.), setting the speed and momentum parameters, and operating the remotely controlled diecast metal ElectroCouplers. Unlike their Master Line counter parts, Trainman models are not equipped with functioning exhaust units nor do they have the Engineer On Board speed controllers.

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The separately applied details are evident on the rear of the locomotive model, as well as wire hand grabs, end platform drop step and safety chain, and, as appropriate for our Santa Fe review sample, a rear snow plow to match the one up front. While the grilles of the radiator section are not see-through, Atlas O has done a nice job of replicating the Phase II production units' protruding sheet metal style grilles quite well. Note also the low position of the engine air intake filter at the front of the radiator section on the model. It's indicative of the majority of the U23Bs built.

Although I'm just as much a fan of command control and the RailSounds system as the next O gauger, the real bargain with these Trainman locomotives is in the fact that conventional operators, with either 3-rail or 2-rail (minimum 36-inch radius curves) layouts, can purchase one of these smart looking U-boats for under $250.00. Hi-railers still receive an electronic horn and bell sound, which can be activated by any AC transformer equipped with sound buttons, along with traditional magnetic knuckle couplers while O scalers get a locomotive that includes scale flange wheels, fixed pilots, and body mounted metal Kadee-style magnetic operating knuckle couplers, with conversion of the model to DCC a relatively easy task.

Final Thoughts

In today's economy, every hobby dollar counts. That's why these new Trainman U23B models meet my accountant's stamp of approval as a product showing excellent value for the money with its scale accuracy, quality of craftsmanship, and versatility among the different O-gauge disciplines. Yes, this new Atlas O model is a responsible (and greatly satisfying) hobby expenditure for sure! See artwork of all the roadnames currently available for the Trainman U23B at www.atlastrainman.com/atotrainman.htm

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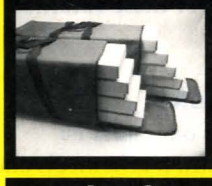
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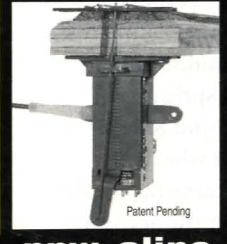
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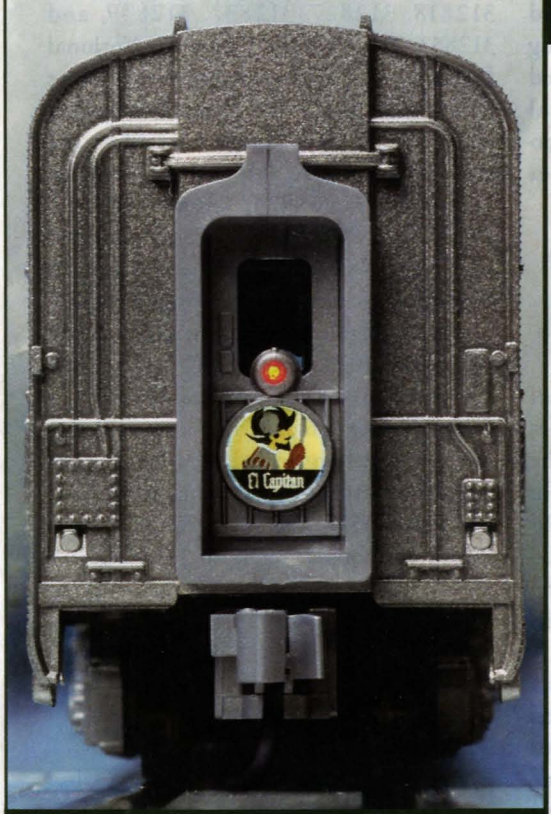

(Above) An illuminated tail sign adorns the rear of the train, amidst other prototype details that have been crisply molded onto the ends of the car.

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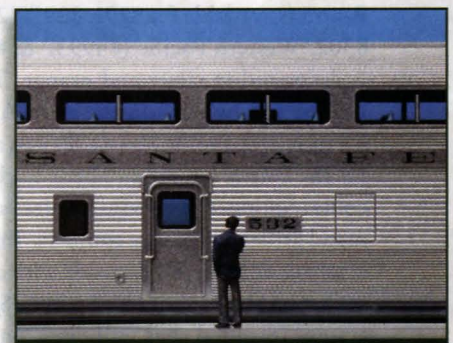

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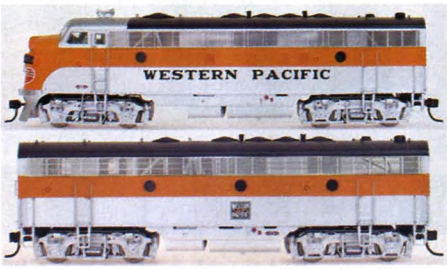
Intermountain EMD FP7 & U18B's pull in new rollingstock

HO — Intermountain has released two EMD FP7 and F7B units, four U18B locomotives, a cylindrical covered hopper, seven 4,750 cubic foot three-bay hoppers, an undecorated 1,958 cubic foot two-bay hopper kit, and six 1958 cubic foot hoppers. The models have six roadnumbers, unless otherwise noted.

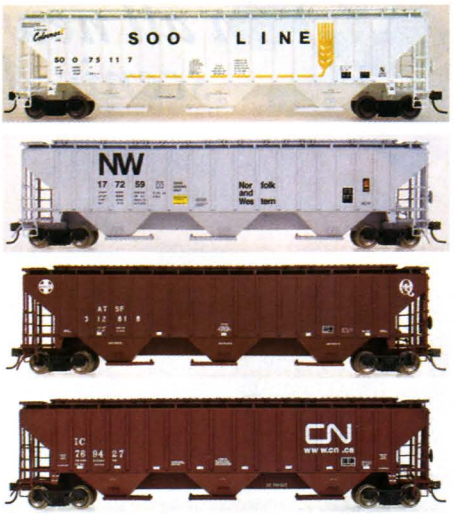


Two EMD FP7 and F7B units are available. Southern Pacific (#49936 & #49536) is decorated in the later gray scarlet paint scheme. The A-unit is available for roadnumbers 6447, 6449, 6458, and 6460 and the B-unit is available for 8291, 8297, 8299, and 8302. Western Pacific (#49937 & #49537) is decorated in silver and orange. The FP7 has the red "wings" on the nose. Available for numbers 804-A, 804-D, 805-A, and 805-D. The B-unit has no numbers. Each model comes equipped with wire handrails, etched metal grilles and Kadee couplers. The FP7 is available either as DCC-ready with an 8-pin socket on the PC board, or with QSI sound system installed that will work on DC or DCC. The FP7 retails for $129.95 without sound or for $199.95 with sound, the F7B retails for $94.94 without sound or $164.95 with sound.

Four new U18B locomotives have been released. The Maine Central (#49452) model is decorated for Guilford Rail System, and is dark gray with an orange stripe wrapping around the body. All of the lettering is in white. It is available for roadnumbers 404, 406, 407, and 408. Ferrocarriles Nacionales De Mexico (#49456) is painted dark green, red, and yellow, the hood is green, the nose and rails are red, and the sill and steps are yellow. The large "N de M" logo on the side is in silver. It is available for numbers 9000, 9001, 9004, and 9017. Seaboard System (#49462) is painted gray with a red and yellow Seaboard System logo. The lettering is in white. The grab irons on the front and rear are yellow. It is available for numbers 1905, 1908, 1914, and 1920. The CSX model (#49476) is decorated in the striking blue and gray. All of the lettering is in blue. The grab irons on the front and rear are in yellow. Available numbers are: 1928, 1939, 1954, and 1989. Each model comes with sharp painting and lettering, and details such as etched metal grilles and radiator sections, metal grab irons, and coupler lift bars. The locomotives retail for $139.95 without sound, or $219.95 with sound.

A new cylindrical covered hopper is available for Ferrocarril Del Pacifico (#45132) painted light green and lettered for FCP. The grab irons are safety yellow. It is available for roadnumbers 21013, 21058, 21149, 21226, 21274, and 21395. The model is equipped with etched metal roofwalks, metal wheelsets, and Kadee couplers. The hopper retails for $31.95.

Seven 4,750 cubic foot three-bay hoppers have been released equipped with etched metal roof walks, metal wheelsets, and Kadee couplers. The first hopper, SOO Line (#45304), is painted white with green lettering for roadnumbers 74836, 74914, 75138, 75153, 75160, and 75182. The second, Burlington Northern (#45334), is painted BN green with white lettering. The large BN logo is on the left of the car sides. It is available for roadnumbers 467229, 467315, 467962, 468173, 468508, and 468647. The third car is decorated for Norfolk & Western (#45358) in gray with black lettering, and is

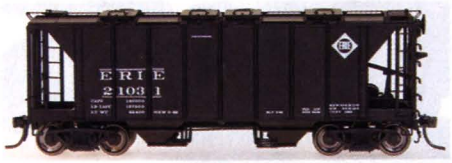


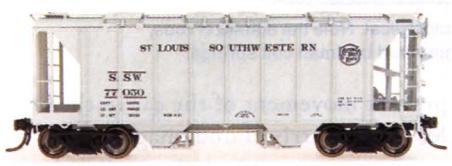
available for numbers 177259, 177362, 177493, 177548, 177635, and 178000. The fourth car, ATSF Q (#45361), is painted mineral red with white lettering. The "Q" Quality logo is on the upper right of the car sides. It is available for roadnumbers 312805, 312818, 312827, 312832, 312849, and 312853. The fifth car, Canadian National (#45372), is freight car brown with white lettering. The cars have an IC reporting mark with the CN "Wet Noodle" herald on the right of the car side. It is available for numbers 765385, 765826, 766497, 767613, 768208, and 769349. The fifth car is painted for Terminal Grain (#45393) in white with black slope sheets. The lettering is red and black. Available roadnumbers are: 1003, 1011, 1026, 1038, 1049, and 1050. The sixth car is decorated for West Bend Elevator Co. (#45395). The company had a small leased fleet of these hoppers, painted bright pink with black lettering. It is available for numbers 55266, 55271, 55278, 55283, 55287, and 55295. The hoppers retail for $31.95 each.

An undecorated 1,958 cubic foot two bay hopper kit (#43698) is now available. It comes without the opening along the side sill between the hoppers. The kit includes an etched metal roofwalk; all the grab irons are formed metal wire. The model is molded to accept the Kadee No. 78 scale-size coupler (not included). Plastic wheelsets are included. The hopper retails for $19.95.

Six 1,958 cubic foot hoppers have been released. The models are equipped with

etched metal roofwalks, wire grab irons, metal wheelsets, and Kadee No. 78 scale couplers. The first car, ATSF (#48671), is painted mineral red with white lettering. The Santa Fe herald is black and white. This model also has the standing roof ribs and is





numbered for 181682, 181698, 181754, 181781, 181836, and 181945. The second car is decorated for Chicago & Eastern Illinois (#48672) in freight car red with white lettering for cars 80007, 80014, 80018, 80023, 80039, and 80042. The third car, Chicago Great Western (#48673), is painted gray with black lettering. The "Corn Belt Route" herald is black and white. It is available for numbers 70027, 70031, 70046, 70053, 70065, and 70078. The fourth hopper is decorated for Erie (#48674) as-delivered in black for numbers 21002, 21015, 21023, 21031, 21036, and 21048. The fifth car, SSW (#48675), is painted gray with black lettering and herald. The Cotton Belt had twenty-five of these cars. The hopper is available for numbers 77050, 77054, 77057, 77065, 77068, and 77072. The sixth, Southern Pacific (#48676), is decorated in the as-delivered gray paint with black lettering. The herald is black and white. Southern Pacific owned the majority of these 1,958 cubic foot hoppers. Available numbers are 165006, 165035, 165058, 165079, 165121, and 165143. The models have closed sides, and retail for $31.95 each.

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REVIEW **HO**

Athearn's new SP coach is first class all the way

Review and Photos by Alan Houtz

Southern Pacific 77-C-3 Pullman Standard Chair Car, MSRP: $59.98

Athearn Trains
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Long Beach, CA 90806-6834
310-763-7140 • Fax: 562-427-0536
www.athearn.com

On this model, the diaphragm looks very prototypical. Note the stabilizer rods, which also provide tension. These are augmented by small coil springs.

GENERALLY speaking, Athearn has been very good to modelers of the Southern Pacific Railroad. I'm happy to see this trend continue with the arrival of the 77-C-3 Pullman Chair Car. By the time you read this review, this long-awaited model should be available at your local hobby shop.

The Southern Pacific received 15 of these cars in 1937. They were 77 feet end sill to end sill, and 79 feet, 2 inches coupled. As delivered, they were equipped with 48 seats. All of these seats turned except those at the bulkhead walls, so the cars could be operated in either direction, though they were intended to be operated vestibule forward. They were also equipped with radios and antennas, and were delivered in the Southern Pacific's Dark Olive green for service in the *Challenger* and the *Californian*.

Original equipment included full-width diaphragms, vestibule lights, full skirting, and steam-ejector air conditioning. They were equipped with four-wheel 4-TC-4 triple bolster trucks with clasp brakes, plain journal bearings, and truck-mounted generators. Over the years their skirting was removed, they lost their full width diaphragms, and were equipped with roller bearings. Beginning in 1958, Waukesha air conditioning systems replaced the steam-ejector air conditioning on all but one of the class, #2425. Some cars received 4-TD-2 trucks with disc brakes for service offline. Seating was changed from 48 to 44 seats, or fewer down to 36, depending on the train the cars were assigned to. None of this class was ever painted in the *Daylight* livery.

A Stylish Coach

Athearn has done an excellent job on this model. Everything is top-notch including the packaging. The car comes packed in an attractive dark blue Genesis box with an inner plastic blister pack. Foam rubber spacers at each end prevent movement of the car in the box. My sample arrived undamaged.

The two-tone gray paint is slightly darker than other manufacturer's depictions of this color scheme including both brass and plastic models. It is also slightly darker than many of the color photos I have. Color photos of the period show older cars where the paint is not necessarily fresh. In any case, the car looks good in a train with my other two-tone gray models. With prototype equipment, it is quite common to see matched consists with subtle differences in paint shades, as cars were repainted at different times throughout their service lives. Though I don't have access to factory drift panels, in my opinion, the Athearn paint is dead on. Lettering is crisp. The *Cascade* herald is well done, though I think I would have preferred a decal sheet so that I could apply my own numbers and heralds.

Athearn has done an excellent job of capturing the look of Southern Pacific's two-tone gray passenger car scheme. The car's lettering is nice and crisp, and the attractive Cascade herald looks perfect. Notice how the dark gray stripe extends into the fluting. This was done so that the chair car's stripe would be width of the stripe on the sleeping cars.

Underbody detail is excellent on this model. The steam-ejector-type air-conditioning equipment is represented, as are the water tank, air reservoirs, brake gear, and other appurtenances.

Dimensionally, the car is a perfect 77 feet from end sill to end sill. Diaphragm to diaphragm or coupled distance is also correct at 79 feet, 2 inches. I did not have a second Athearn car to couple with, but when coupled to a Walthers car the diaphragms touched until the slack was taken out, and then only a small gap showed. Those wanting to work with couplers and draft gear will be able to eliminate this easily. Window spacing and sizing is correct, including the raised window in the ladies' lounge.

This model depicts a 77-C-3 as it would have appeared from 1953–1960. The center skirts and full width diaphragms have been removed by this time, and roller bearings have been applied to the trucks. My review sample was numbered 2429 and wears the *Cascade* herald. Purists will note that the 2429 was not one of the four cars placed in *Cascade* service, and does not have the 44-seat plan that those cars were equipped with. There will be three numbers available in this paint scheme though, and of these, 2433 is correct for a *Cascade* car. The radio antenna present on the prototype is absent, even though all of the photos of this car in my library showed it present for this car type in this time period. I contacted the folks at Athearn and asked why and was told it had been missed. This is unfortunate but, realistically, I don't see it being a problem. Those wanting strict prototypical accuracy can easily add it to the car. I don't see it deterring anyone from buying the model. Other than this one anomaly, I rate the overall detail and prototype fidelity of the car as "excellent."

Comparing the car to photographs of the real 2429 in the Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society's excellent book on coaches, I found that the underbody detailing does an excellent job of duplicating the prototype's steam ejector air conditioning and other appurtenances. The only underbody detail I missed was the lavatory drainpipes, and these would interfere with the car's operation on all but the broadest curves. Steam and signal lines are also absent, due to the swinging coupler pockets.

Interior detail is the nicest I have seen on an HO model. The seats are colored *Cascade* blue with white headrest covers. The interior walls, luggage racks, and floor are beige. Lavatories and lounges are furnished, and the large round mirrors at each end of the main cabin are included, as are the mirrors in the ladies' lounge. This interior begs for passengers!

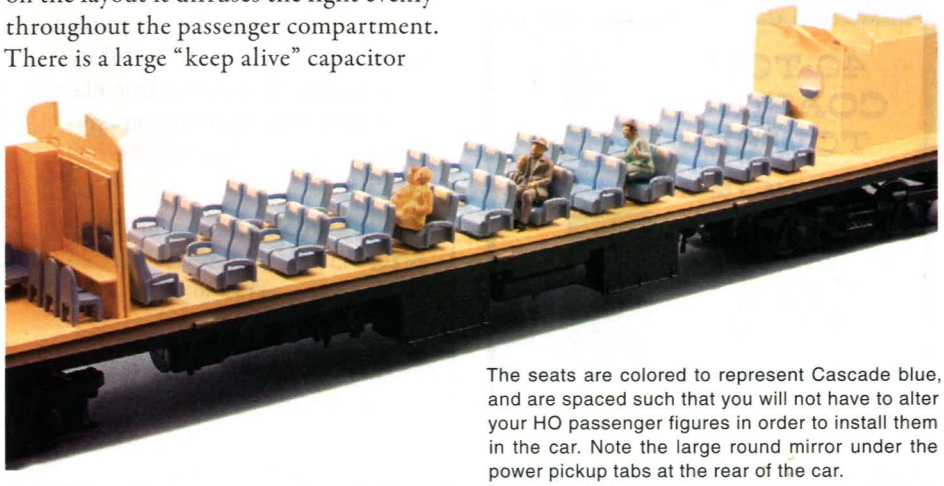
The cars' mechanical features are very nice, as well. Wire details are all factory-installed, so there will be no drilling holes for grab irons or steps. On this car, the diaphragms are prototypical in appearance. The stabilizer rods are present, and function. Inner and outer diaphragm plates are separately applied parts. Small coil springs provide tension instead of plastic whisker springs. The 4-TC-4 trucks are nicely rendered and have spring-loaded pickup pins to transfer power to the car's interior lighting unit. This design should prove to be very reliable. Power is picked up from all eight wheels. Axle centers are non-conducting.

The interior lighting module is furnished with the car, not added later by the modeler, and is quite a little piece of equipment in its own right. A series of white LED's are mounted on the board. A strip of plastic gives the effect of fluorescent lighting if you look directly at it, but on the layout it diffuses the light evenly throughout the passenger compartment. There is a large "keep alive" capacitor that kept the LED's lit for a staggering two minutes and ten seconds after power was removed from the track. There will be no problems with flickering lights in these cars once the capacitor is charged.

Plastic McHenry scale-size couplers are provided, and coupler height was correct. There is a full width coupler cover over the draft gear box, which is closed with a Phillips head screw. Roll quality was excellent without any lubrication, though normal maintenance should be practiced. One word of caution: the Athearn website recommends a 24-inch minimum radius for these cars. This is not stated anywhere on the packaging or the parts diagram. Truck and coupler pocket swing is generous, and the car itself should negotiate 22-inch radius curves. I was not able to test this, or how it would behave when coupled to other equipment. Modelers with tight curves should consider this warning.

Adding Passengers

Disassembly of the car is fairly straightforward. The exploded drawing that is furnished with the car does not tell you much about taking the car apart, but I was able to puzzle it out. To remove the body from the chassis, first gently pry the ends off of the car. No tools are needed. These are press fit, and there are four locating pins and matching holes at each end. A sticky adhesive



The seats are colored to represent Cascade blue, and are spaced such that you will not have to alter your HO passenger figures in order to install them in the car. Note the large round mirror under the power pickup tabs at the rear of the car.

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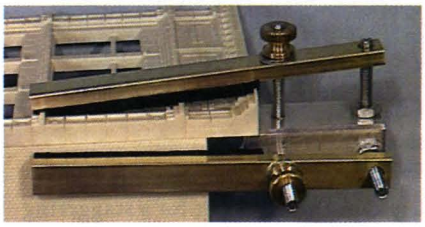

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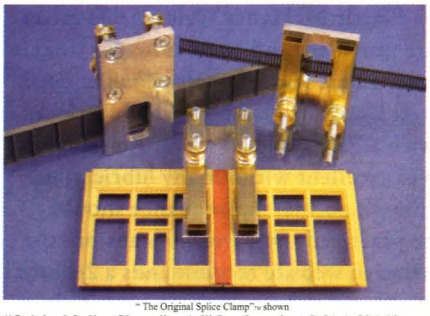

"The Original Splice Clamp"™ shown

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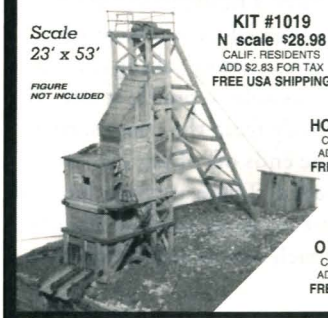

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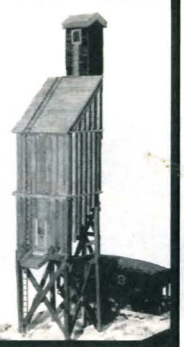

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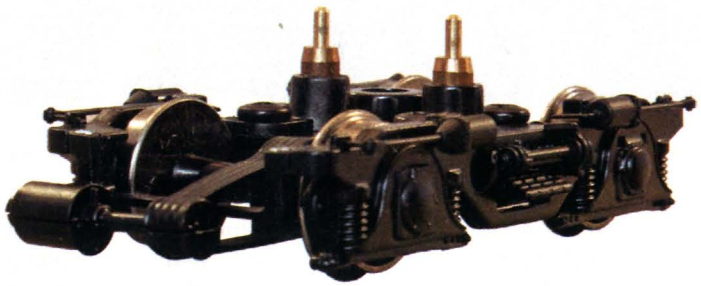

Athearn has done an excellent job on the 4-TC-4 trucks and the belt driven generator. Spring loaded pins transfer track power to the car chassis. This method of power transfer is very reliable, and does a great job with the car's suspension system as well.

holds them in place. I was reminded of rubber cement or silicone that had not fully cured. Keep track of which end goes where, as the A and B ends are not interchangeable. After the ends are separated, the body can be removed from the chassis in much the same way a Genesis F-unit shell is removed from its chassis. Spread the body sides gently and separate the body from the chassis. You may then add your passengers and any additional details such as window shades to your individual tastes. The seats are glued in place, but could be removed and rearranged in order to model different seating plans if desired.

Three numbers are being offered in the two-tone gray scheme, as well as three in the General Service stainless steel finish with red letter board. An undecorated version will also be available.

Final Thoughts

In addition to Dark Olive green and two tone gray, these cars also appeared in Union Pacific's Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray for the *City of San Francisco*, and *Daylight* Red and Aluminum for the *Golden State*; in addition to black underbody paint, cars also had dark gray or even aluminum underbodies depending on the paint scheme. There are photos of 77-C-3s in service in early 1971, so this car will have a broad appeal to those modeling passenger service on the Southern Pacific.

All in all, Athearn has done a splendid job on this model. They have risen to the challenge and produced a passenger car that stands up well alongside the products of any other manufacturer in this market. I hope we see more Genesis passenger cars soon.

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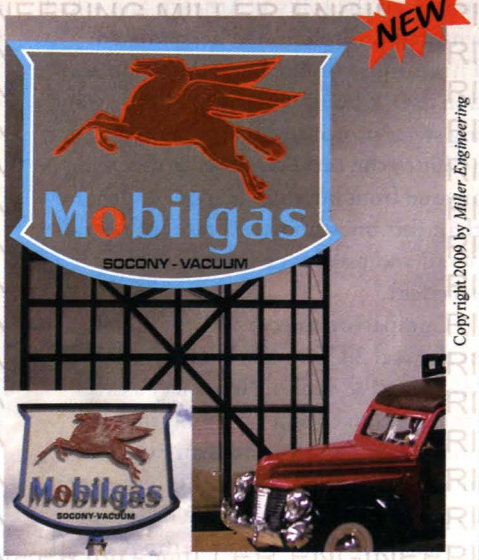

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REVIEW HO

"Kim's Garage, A Nice Addition to Atlas's Lovely Ladies Home Series"

Review and Photos by Art Lake

Kim's Classic Garage Kit, (#735), MSRP: $48.35

Atlas Model Railroad Co.
378 Florence Ave
Hillside, NJ. 07205
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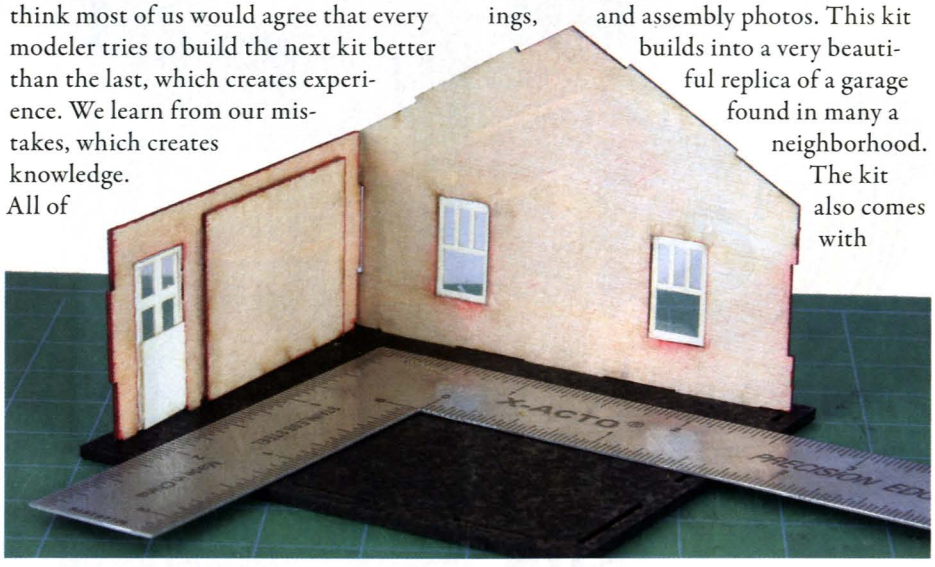
www.atlasrr.com

A team effort, N Scale Architect designed Kim's Garage and Atlas markets this wonderful kit. All the parts are packaged in plastic zip-lock bag with instructions, window glazing, plastic roofing shingles, and laser-cut micro plywood parts. Take your time and you will have a very nice-looking addition to your layout.

THERE are modelers who are "Scratchbuilders." Some people just like to build kits. And then there are others who want "Ready-built" structures for their layouts. Whatever category you fall into there are many reasons why we built kits. It serves as a form of relaxation, a way to escape from the stress of everyday lives by an act of physical creation. It can be a a form of psychotherapy, or a bit of all of the above.

Why a modeler chooses to build models only matters to the individual. But I think most of us would agree that every modeler tries to build the next kit better than the last, which creates experience. We learn from our mistakes, which creates knowledge. All of these things add up to create a sense of accomplishment. Which brings me to my latest kit-building experience.



Using a square ensures the walls are square and true. The parts seem to fall together with no problems. This kit is designed very well; it would be easy to super detail the interior with scale strip wood 2 by 4 studs and other items you would find in a garage. Atlas also has a nice vehicle selection that needs a place to park to get out of the elements.

A Team Effort

N Scale Architect and Atlas have teamed up again to release their third kit in their line of finely detailed, laser-cut micro-plywood garages designed to match Kim's Classic American Home. Two garage kits come packaged in a ziplock plastic bag along with illustrated step-by-step instructions, scale drawings, and assembly photos. This kit builds into a very beautiful replica of a garage found in many a neighborhood. The kit also comes with window glazing and a roofing material, making this a very easy kit to build. Any modeler who has concerns about their kit-building abilities can rest assured that they can build this kit.

Ease of Assembly

The instructions are very well written, with scale drawings and assembly photos that will guide you in the building process. Also, the instructions have listed eight tips to assist you during the building process as well as advice on the tools needed to complete the project. I used a hobby knife with a sharp No. 11 blade, a square to make sure the walls were square and true, and a metal straight edge for cutting the window glazing and for measuring the roofing material. I used white craft glue to assemble the buildings and small rubber bands held the walls together until the glue dried. Finishing this structure, I used 320-grit sandpaper, masking tape for masking the side walls' upper portion, red and white spray paint, and a light tan color acrylic bottle paint.

The four steps outlined in the instructions follow a logical order. Step one: Cutting the kit parts. Step two: Assembling the wall windows and doors. Step three: Assembling the walls on the platform. Step four: Admiring your creation. In terms of painting, the colors are clearly indicated on the instruction

Paint this structure any color to match your surrounding buildings and with a little weathering and touch-up paint, some scenery, and detailing, this kit will be ready for display. Building this kit was a fun and entertaining project.

sheets. Of course, it is up to the modeler to choose the colors to match the surrounding area and building of their layout, module, or diorama.

I followed the instructions step-by-step without any problems. Using the detail drawings as a reference will help you locate the parts described in the instructions and make assembling easy. The assembly photos show you how to assemble parts and will also help you create a very beautiful addition to the Lovely Ladies Home Series buildings.

A Couple Minor Details

The marketing of this kit stated that the roof shingles were self-sticking. However, the instructions direct you to apply a thin layer of glue across the roof panels to adhere the shingles in Step Three. As I stated before, I followed the instructions word-for-word and I did not use the advertised self-sticking feature. After realizing this, I checked a scrap piece of shingles and found that they were not self-sticking as stated on the package cover.

Another problem I encountered was with photo nine showing the placement of the trim parts. The photo shows the trim parts for the eves (B2A and B4A) as separate pieces. Both parts are one piece and they fit into place perfectly on the side of the walls (B2 and B4), not one piece on the wall and the other on the eve of the roof.

Overall Impressions

This kit is well designed for the novice modeler, but will be fun for the more advanced kit builder as well. The kit parts fit together with ease and the alignment is not an issue. The only part that I would have changed is the roof shingles. An aftermarket replacement would have been better for the intended use that I have for the completed structure. Otherwise, this is a very nice addition to your railroad structures on your layout or diorama. I used spray paint for this project and brush paint for the upper portions on parts B2 and B4, the sidewalls. I take my time when building kits or scratchbuilding because I like to enjoy the moment. The kit took about six hours to build including painting, assembly, and writing notes when the white craft glue was drying.

I am not to sure about Atlas' warranty policy concerning their kits. My experience with the customer service department has always been great. They are very knowledgeable, helpful, and friendly. In my opinion they are one of the best in the modeling industry. Atlas has set the standard when it comes to assisting modelers.

Finishing Touches

Mistakes will always be made. It is the process of learning. Advancement is defined as not making the same mistakes twice. Along with knowledge and our experiences we will develop wisdom. It might seem like a fleeting task, but we will always strive to build that perfect model. All of these ingredients combined will make us a better modeler. With this kit, Atlas has given us modelers the edge on this process of becoming a better modeler. I am sure that you will enjoy building this kit and will be proud to display this structure and not be ashamed to admit that *you* built this structure.

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Water Tank
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New Freight Warehouse from Hobo Rails

1:22.5 — Hobo Rails has released a new freight warehouse and platform (#FW-2). It is built over a strong cedar sub-frame, the interior of the building is accessible for cleaning, and maintenance or installation of lights by removing it from platform via four stainless steel bolts.

The warehouse features scale cedar boards used for the board construction of sidewalls; real glass windows set in cedar framework; and individually cut and placed cedar shingles on the roof. The chimney, made of brass, also serves as a vent to allow heat to escape from the interior. Weatherproof sealer featuring UV protection and Mildewcide is applied to both the interior and exterior, and weatherproof glue is used in the construction of the entire structure. The building dimensions are 14-1/4 inches long by 9-3/4 inches wide by 9-3/8-inches high (peak of roof). The platform dimensions are 18-1/4 inches long by 13-1/2 inches wide by 1-7/8-inches high. The warehouse retails for $259.95.

Hobo Rails, 3761 West Woodview Drive, Ludington, MI 49431; E-mail: hobodave@charter.net; www.hoborails.com

New post office kit available from BEST

HO — Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains has announced the release of their Wickenburg Post Office, which was built as a result of a project to recreate the 1915 town of Wickenburg, Arizona for the Desert Caballeros Museum.

Each kit includes laser-cut wood and "stucco" with peel-and-stick rolled tarpaper roofing and corrugated metal roofing. Also included are old injected doors and windows, cast metal detail parts, and a decal billboard. Billed as being easy to assemble, the kit includes step-by-step instruction. When built, the Wickenburg Post Office (Kit 1020) has a footprint of 3-3/4 inches long by 6-1/2 inches wide and retails for $65.95.

The town of Wickenburg was formed in 1863 when $30 million in gold was mined, bringing miners and ranchers to settle in the area. Soon, the town was incorporated into the U.S. railways and the town continued to grow. This kit represents the Wickenburg post office, which still stands at 222 E. Wickenburg Way.

Bollinger Edgerly Scale Trains, 375 Bean Hill Rd, Belmont, NH 03220; 603-267-1818; E-mail: brian@besttrains.com; www.besttrains.com

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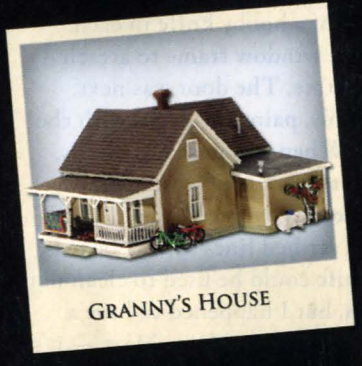
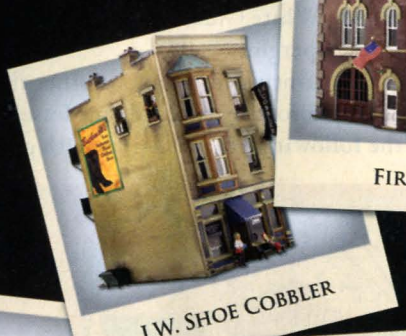


Granny's House

Grand Gazebo



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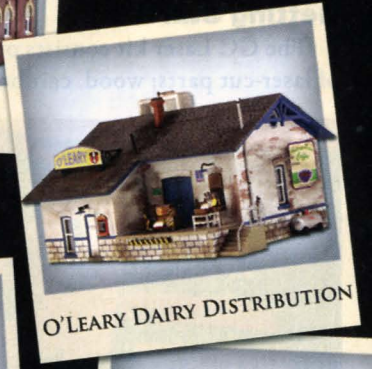

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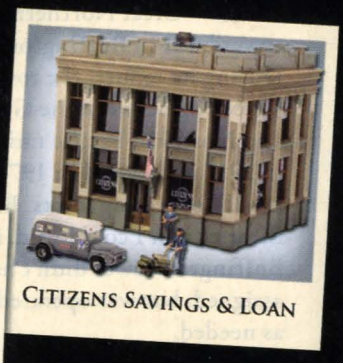

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REVIEW HO

GC Laser's new Interlocking Tower is a nice-looking kit at a very nice price

Review and Photos by Rich Cobb

Great Northern R.R. Interlocking Tower kit, No.1292, MSRP: $24.99
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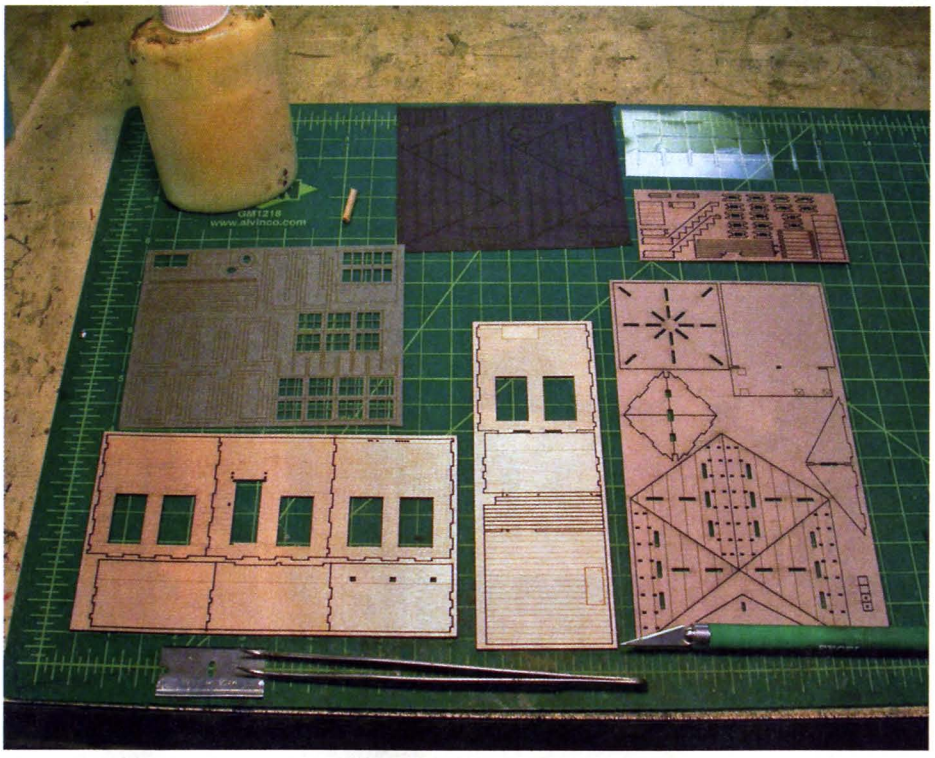


The GC Laser kit contains a lot of parts for the small interlocking tower. The tools I used are also shown: a hobby knife, tweezers, flat blade razor, square, and glue.

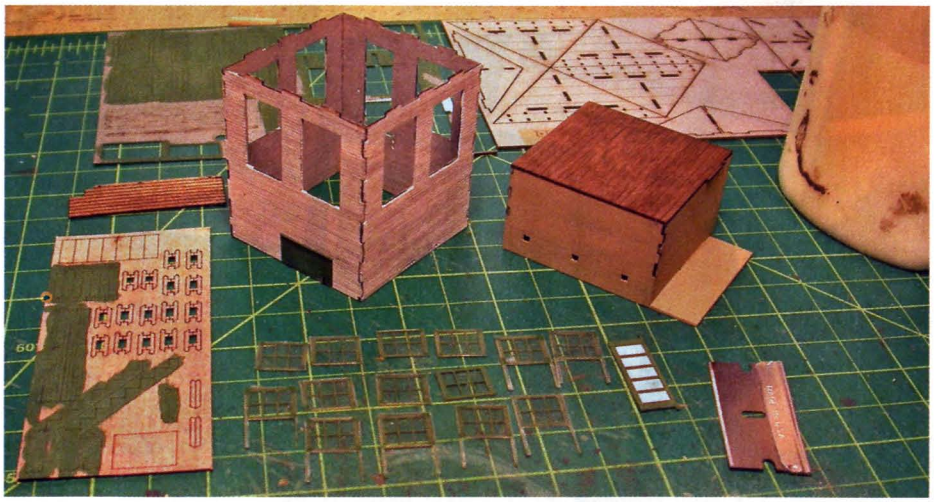
GC LASER'S Interlocking Tower kit is based on the Great Northern Railroad tower built in Buffington, Minnesota. During its tenure, the tower controlled a crossing between the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads. Built in 1917 and closed in 1974, the tower had 14 operating levers. Based on the information I could find, it appears the Buffington tower didn't have an operator assigned, but was operated by train crews as needed.

Getting Started

The GC Laser kit consists of sheets of laser-cut parts: wood, cardboard, construction paper, and acetate. Three pages of picture instructions are included in the kit, along with the parts layout on each sheet. Each part is identified with a number to help in construction.

No tools are listed, but just the basics are required: a hobby knife, single-edged razor blade, tweezers, a small square, and some weights to hold parts while the glue is drying. Carpenter's glue is suggested, but I had good results with Elmers White Glue. I also used some thick superglue.

No painting instructions other than color photos are included, but I used the following Floquil paints with good results: #11 Reefer White, #40 Dark Green, #130 Lettering Gray (for the interior walls and steps), #16 Aged Concrete, and #17 Weathered Black. MinWax Walnut was used to stain the floor. I prefer to spray paint parts and structures, but as many modelers don't have access to an airbrush, I brush-painted everything on this project to see how it would turn out.



I pre-painted the parts and allowed ample drying time before assembling the tower. Some touch up will be needed after the parts are glued together, but it makes the process much easier.

Building the Tower

I started assembly with the windows after the paint had dried. I used very small amounts of super glue applied with the tip of a hobby knife in each corner of the window frame to attach the clear acetate. The door was next. After assembly, paint the edges with the trim color. When it came to the walls, I found the two coats of white paint I used to get even coverage had filled in most of the scribed lines for the boards. A hobby knife could be used to clean out the grooves, but I happened to have a weathering tool from Micro Mart — it's a pen-like device that has adjustable wire bristles inside. This made quick work of cleaning out the grooves, and also gave the walls a weathered look. The corners of the wood walls will be covered with trim, but the joints of the concrete foundation will be visible, so touch up the corners with paint.

At some point you should decide if you want interior lighting. If so, drill a hole in the floor and the base for some wires (I picked a corner on the track side so the wires wouldn't show through the windows). Contrary to the instructions, I assembled the wood walls separately rather than one wall at a time around the concrete foundation. For a change I was lucky and got the completed walls to slide down over the foundation.

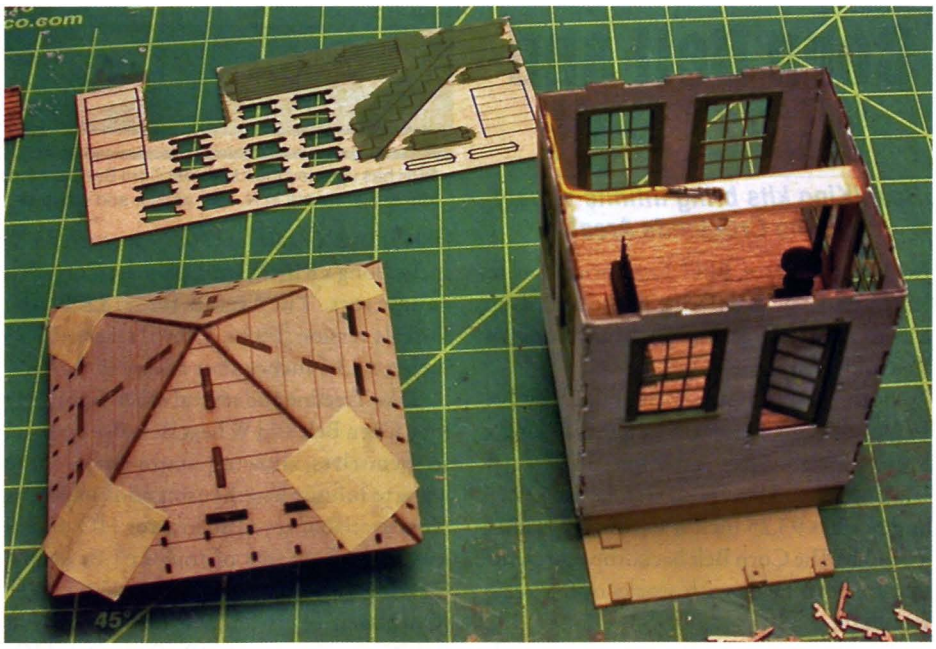
Next were the windowsills followed by the outer frames, then the upper window half, the lower window, and finally the interior window frame. If you're extremely careful in gluing the interior frame to the wall and not to the lower window half, the lower halves will slide up and down, or you can position some of the windows partly open.

I installed a grain of wheat light bulb supported by a piece of scrap wood in the center of the building to illuminate the tower during night operations. With all the windows in the structure, some interior detailing is almost mandatory; I put in a Grandt Line Passenger Car Stove (#5008) and made some operating levers from a piece of Atlas fence (#774).

Again, not following the instructions, I assembled the sub roof as a separate unit, only to find that it would not fit down over the tabs on the tops of the walls. (You'd think a guy would learn after 60 or so years). I could say that I'd planned to make the roof removable to add more details later on.... In any event, flush cutting rail nippers removed the tabs and the roof sits on the walls. A piece of dowel is supplied for a smoke jack — I substituted a small stack from a Grandt Line Engine House Stack set (#5084).

I found the corner trim supplied for the walls to be almost a scale foot shorter than the walls; it appears that it was designed to leave the lower part of the corners exposed. I used some 1 x 6 that I had on hand to cover the corners, and used the supplied pieces as horizontal trim along the bottom of the walls. The stairs were next; I think if I were doing it again, I'd assemble the parts against the tower, rather than as a separate unit. There was a small gap between the interior floor at the door and the stair platform; a piece of scrap wood made a good doorsill and covered it up.

The last step is putting together the framework for the control rods. Turnouts and signals were controlled by the operating levers in the tower through a series of rods or pipes connected by eccentric cranks. The rods were supported above the ground every few feet by brackets with rollers. In northern areas, the mechanism outside the tower was covered with a wood structure to prevent ice and snow from interfering with the operation.



Shown here is the sub-roof and interior details (not included). Note the grain-of-wheat bulb in the ceiling and the (Grant Line) Passenger Car stove along the right wall; just a few little additions that make all the difference.

Here's the finished model ready to keep the traffic flowing smoothly. Add a couple of figures, maybe a trash can or two, and a dirty pick up to really bring this scene to life.

Final Notes

GC Laser has put together an inexpensive kit that makes an interesting model. Everything fits together very well. I'd suggest that you have some experience with other kits before tackling this project, as there are a lot of delicate parts, and above all, follow the instructions. If you take your time and work carefully, you'll have a very nice structure for your layout. Construction time was about 10 hours spread over a few days.

Corn Belt and Wheat Belt

BPH has updated their Midwest Corn Belt backdrop kit to merge with a Midwest Wheat Field. The backdrop kits are available in N, HO, and O, and could be modified to work on S-scale layouts as well.

SceniKing kits bring infinite variety to the Croplands Area!

N, HO, & O — BPH Enterprises has released two new SceniKing photo backdrop kits to create the feel of the Midwest Corn Belt and Wheat Field.

Both the HO Corn Belt (F042) and N version (F043) measure 53.25 inches long x 8 inches high. They retail for $15.95 each. The O-scale version (F041) retails for $39.95 and reaches 93.25 inches x 13.5 inches after assembly. The Corn Belt backdrop represents mature corn fields with stocks over 7 scale feet high.

The Wheat Belt kits include extra panels at the end of each scene to allow modelers to connect it to Corn Belt. The HO-scale kit (F045) and N-scale kit (F046) are each 53.25 inches long x 8 inches tall, plus the Corn Belt connectors. They retail for $18.95. The O-scale version (F044, $39.95) reaches 77.75 inches x 13.5 inches after assembly.

Like Treeline and several other SceniKing kits, Corn Belt and Wheat Belt also connect to themselves, allowing continuation of the scene to infinite lengths using additional kits. Now available are 4Pac-kits for HO and N kits, providing sets of four kits to enable creation of longer backdrops. Kit F043P (Corn Belt-N) is $52.95, F046P (Wheat Belt-N) is $58.95, F042P (Corn Belt-HO) retails for $52.95, and F045P (Wheat Belt-HO) is $58.95. Each extend over 17 feet and also connect to their scale-mates, allowing infinite distance and variety for a Croplands scene.

The top edge of all Croplands scenes is a constant sky blue, enabling upward extension using matching paint. SceniKing photo backdrop kits are printed as individual panels on 8-1/2 inch x 14 inch 24-pound paper. Careful assembly using the manufacturer's instructions is said to create a seamless image. The Croplands Series is available through authorized dealers or direct from BPH Enterprises.

BPH Enterprises, 4 Palmer Dr, Barrie, ON L4M 9V4; 705-739-4878; E-mail: les@sceniking.com; www.sceniking.com

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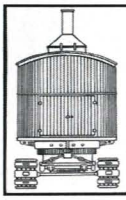

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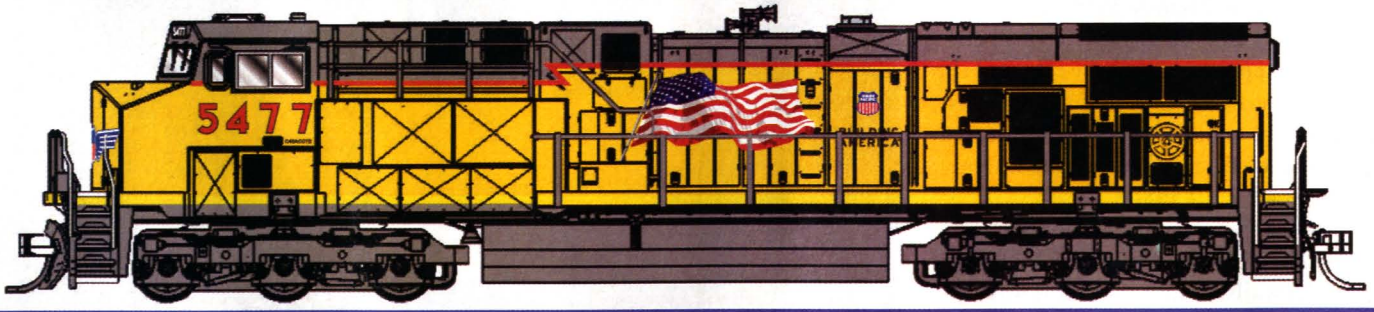

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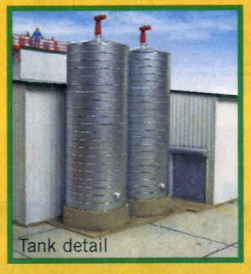

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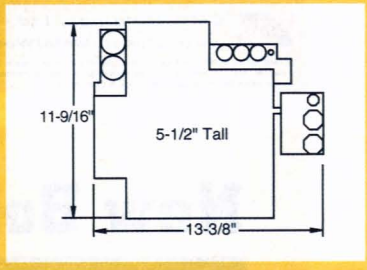

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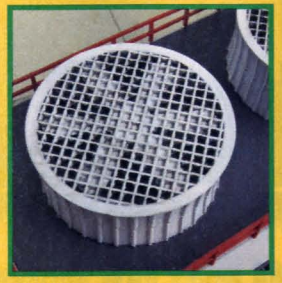

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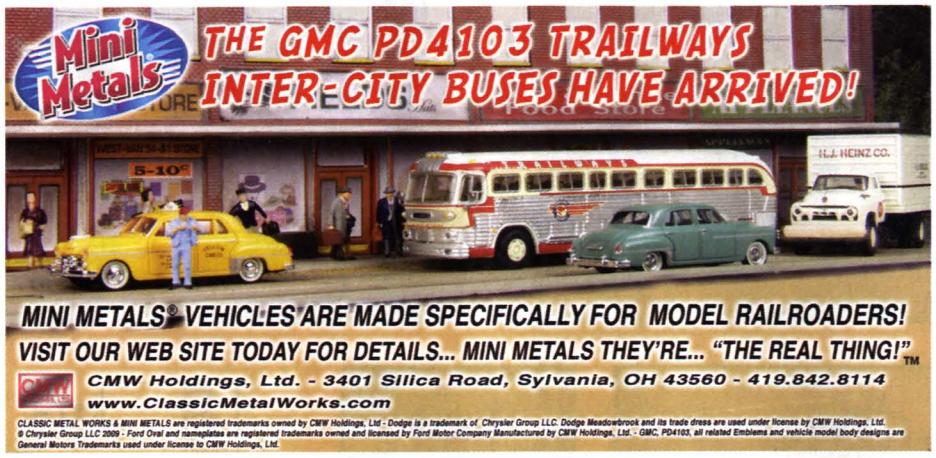
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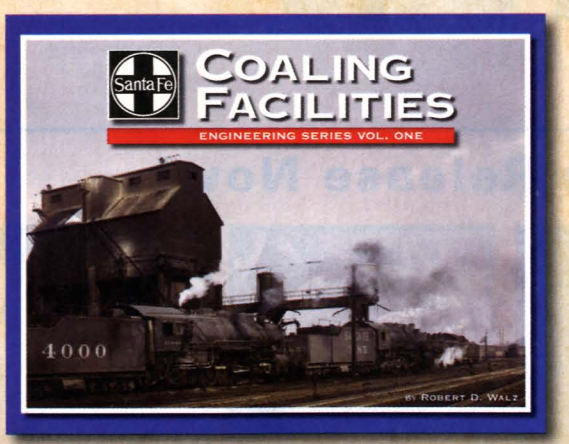

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Sidetrack's Wigwam burner adds history to HO layouts

HO — Sidetrack Laser has released a new Wigwam-style chip burner. This burner depicts several common features of many chip burners used in the early days of sawmill operations, and it will fit easily into any sawmill installation, past or present. The kit features laser-cut under structure and base detailing. Also included is corrugated metal siding and mesh top. It measures 3-3/4 inches wide by 3-3/4 inches tall. The chip burner retails for $42.95.

From the early days of sawmills, there was the problem of waste disposal from the mill processes. Up through the late 1950s, the mills burned their waste in individually designed chip burners. Many of these burners were shaped like wigwams and got their name from their shape. After the 1950s, when air pollution began being a concern, things changed. Mills also found a new market for their chip wastes in the paper/pulp industry and began hauling it to the pulp mills. Many chip burners became silent sentinels to a bygone era, rusting away and surviving many years after their use. Some can still be found today at old mill sites in the backwoods and small communities of timber country.

Sidetrack Laser, P.O. Box 447, Newberg, OR 97132; 503-449-5361; Fax: 503-538-0599; E-mail: larry@sidetracklaser.com; www.sidetracklaser.com

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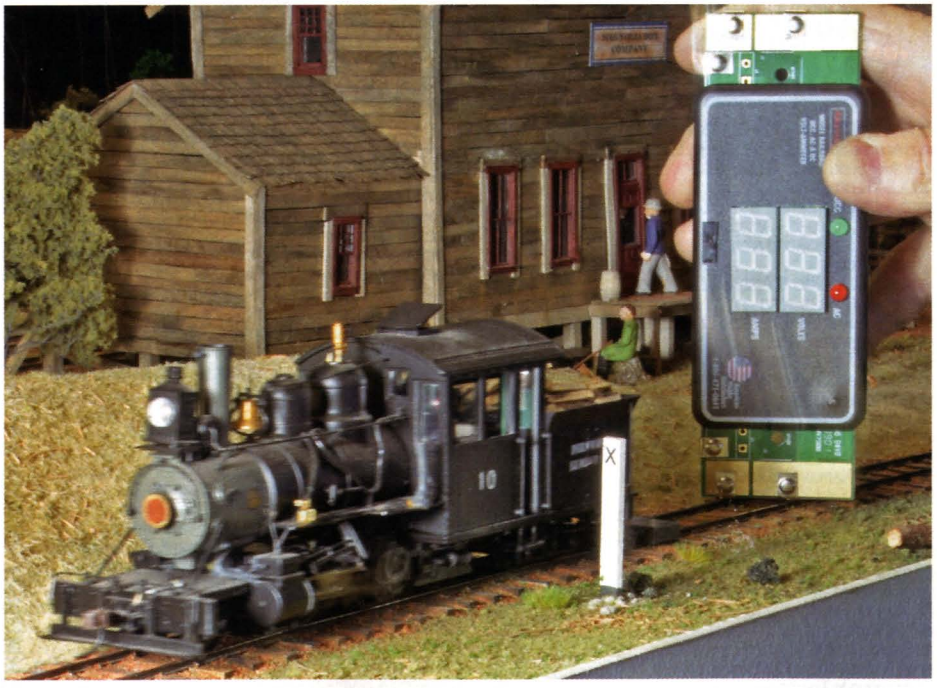


Using the RRampMeter is as simple as placing the contacts on the track and reading the voltage, whether AC, DC, or DCC. To measure amps in addition to voltage, use the test leads, inserting the banana plugs into the left side of the meter, and clipping the alligator clips to the output of the power supply, which has been disconnected from the track. [Editor's Note: The slight blurring of the locomotive is due to the fact it was in motion during the photograph.]

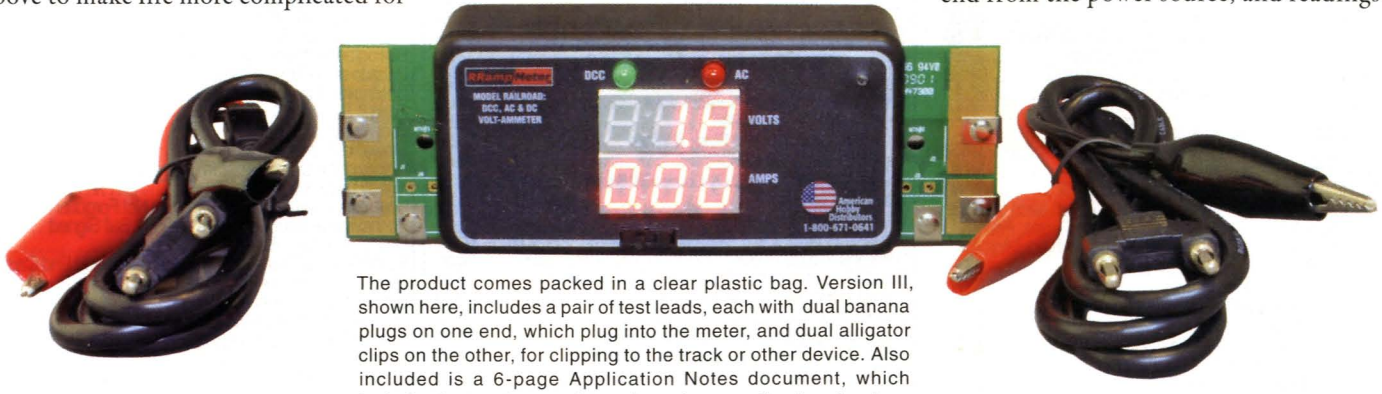
A LOT has changed in the model railroad hobby since *Model Railroad News* first reviewed the RRampMeter from Tony's Train Xchange back in December 2004, close to five years ago. One of the biggest of those changes is the advance of DCC and sound, both of which have created significant changes in the electric/electronic control environment on the model railroad layout. Other notable changes include the decrease in the current requirements of modern hobby motors, and the converse increase in current requirements needed to support sound. And whether or not you've migrated to the DCC environment, some of these changes affect your control environment: the introduction and expansion of dual-mode and even triple-mode decoders in today's locomotives combine with the other changes above to make life more complicated for the modeler in such areas as tracking down shorts, voltage drops and other aberrations, as well as for those interested in testing their equipment or maintaining operational standards.

The RRampMeter

In the beginnings of this new control environment Tony's Train Xchange introduced the RRampMeter to, in Tony's words, provide model railroaders "a simple to use, accurate tool to measure volts and amps for their railroads."

The four versions of the product listed at the beginning of the article include the basic version I, which is the bare circuit board without enclosure or leads, but works just fine by pressing the contact points on the ends of the board to the two track rails; version II, which adds a plastic enclosure and clip leads; version III, which adds 9-volt battery backup to allow reading voltages below 7v DC; and version IV, which is the same as version III, but focused on large scale products and handling 20 amps, as opposed to 10 amps for the other versions. Upgrade parts are offered to convert lower versions to any level up. Other than the 20-amp capability of Version IV, the circuitry is the same for all the versions.

All versions read voltage by connection of the contacts on either end to the track rails, either directly or via jumper wires or the accessory clip leads. To read amperage, current must enter the left end from the power source, and readings



The product comes packed in a clear plastic bag. Version III, shown here, includes a pair of test leads, each with dual banana plugs on one end, which plug into the meter, and dual alligator clips on the other, for clipping to the track or other device. Also included is a 6-page Application Notes document, which includes instructions and templates for mounting in a fascia.

are taken with the right end connected to the track. In this configuration, both amperage and voltage can be read simultaneously. All readouts are via the one-half inch tall red LEDs, three digits each for volts and amps.

In addition to the voltage and amperage readout LEDs, a green indicator LED lights when measuring DCC voltage, a red one lights with AC voltage, and neither lights under DC voltage.

For versions III and IV, there is a small slide switch to change between battery and no-battery operation.

The only fault I found with the product is that the battery is a pretty tight fit in the enclosure, and it would be nice if there were a little door to provide access to the battery to swap it out when it runs down, but that's not a big deal.

Requirements

The RRampMeter is fully self-contained and operational, getting its power from whatever source is being measured. The one limitation is that in measuring voltage below a 7v threshold, the battery option of versions III and IV is required. So if you want to measure a 9v battery, it works fine as long as the battery is near the top of its rating. But for measuring the voltage of a marginal battery or on a straight DC layout, you might want to consider going with version III or IV.

Testing

I tested several 9v batteries, both regular and rechargeable, an MRC Tech II power supply, and two DCC controllers with two RRampMeters — one supplied by Tony's Train Exchange, and one from a friend. I compared the RRampMeters' results with those of a cheap Radio Shack VOM, a Digitrax DT400 throttle, and an old Heathkit analog VOM. The RRampMeters were very close to the Radio Shack and Heathkit meters for the batteries, and about half a volt different from the DT400. Comparative results for the Tech II tests were several volts different between the RRampMeters and the others. The DCC tests were not comparative, since the conventional meters do not work well with DCC voltage. The complete results of the test are in the table, but I found the RRampMeters to be very accurate, easy to read, and easy to handle.

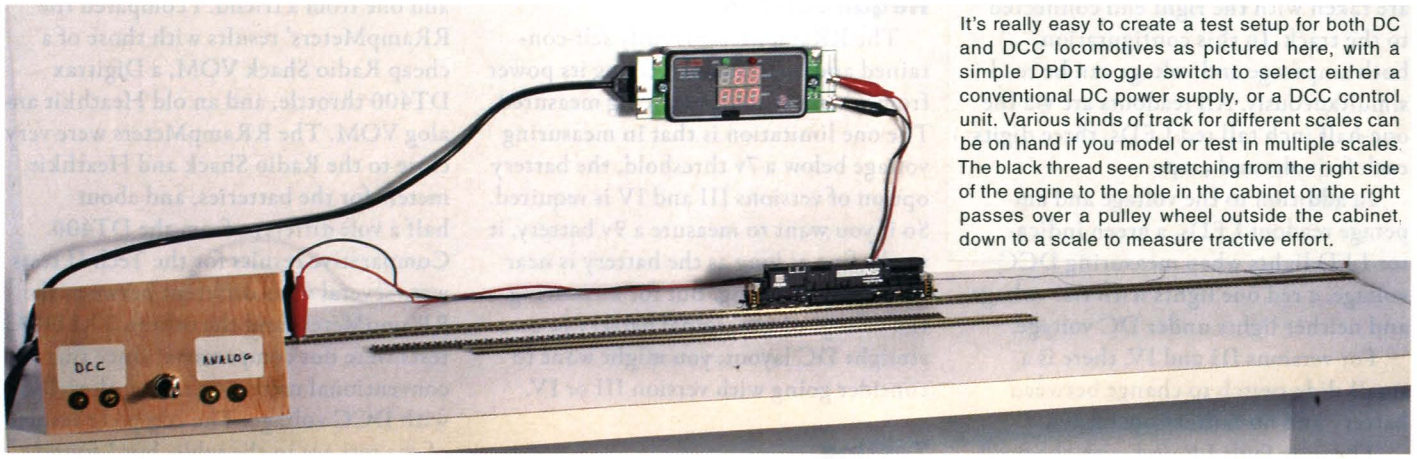
Support

No warranty statement is supplied

POWER SOURCE	RADIO SHACK VOM	NEW RRAMPMETER		OLD RRAMPMETER		DT400	HEATH ANALOG VOM
		BATT #	NO BATT	BATT #	NO BATT		
1. Powerex 1 *	9.9	10.7	10	10.4	9.9	9.3	10
2. Powerex 2 *	8.9	9.6	9	9.3	9	8.3	9.5
3. Chicago Electric *	7.3	F	B	7.4	B	6.6	6
4. Duracel 9v alkaline	9.4	10.2	9.3	9.7	9.3	8.7	9.5
5. MRC Tech II VDC	13.7	F	15.8	16.5	15.7	N/A	12
6. MRC Tech II FDC	14.8	F	16.8	17.4	16.8	N/A	14
7. MRC Tech II AC	18	F	17.6	18.5	17.7	N/A	N/A
8. DCS 100	N/A	10.8	10.9	10.5	10.4	N/A	N/A
9. DB150	N/A	11.7	10.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

NOTES:

*	9 volt nickel metal hydride rechargeable battery
#	When battery-powered, the RRampMeter reads the terminal voltage of a battery power source, rather than the load voltage. The load voltage is a more reliable reading.
B	Blank – insufficient voltage to power RRampMeter
F	Flashing – low battery indicator. The battery used in this meter had marginal voltage. When the RRampMeter first turns on, it shuts all display segments off, so it draws very little current. Once it has the first reading, it turns on the display. This draws much more current. If the battery output is near the operating threshold of the RRampMeter, then when this current draw occurs, the battery voltage drops below the operating threshold and the RRampMeter turns off. Once off, the battery voltage recovers, and the cycle starts over. This results in a flashing display.
5-9	Internal circuitry regulating the output in these power sources make their readings more complex than the pure current from the batteries.
8-9	Digitrax DCC controllers
N/A	Not applicable - physical setup, space and meter capabilities precluded these tests.



It's really easy to create a test setup for both DC and DCC locomotives as pictured here, with a simple DPDT toggle switch to select either a conventional DC power supply, or a DCC control unit. Various kinds of track for different scales can be on hand if you model or test in multiple scales. The black thread seen stretching from the right side of the engine to the hole in the cabinet on the right passes over a pulley wheel outside the cabinet, down to a scale to measure tractive effort.

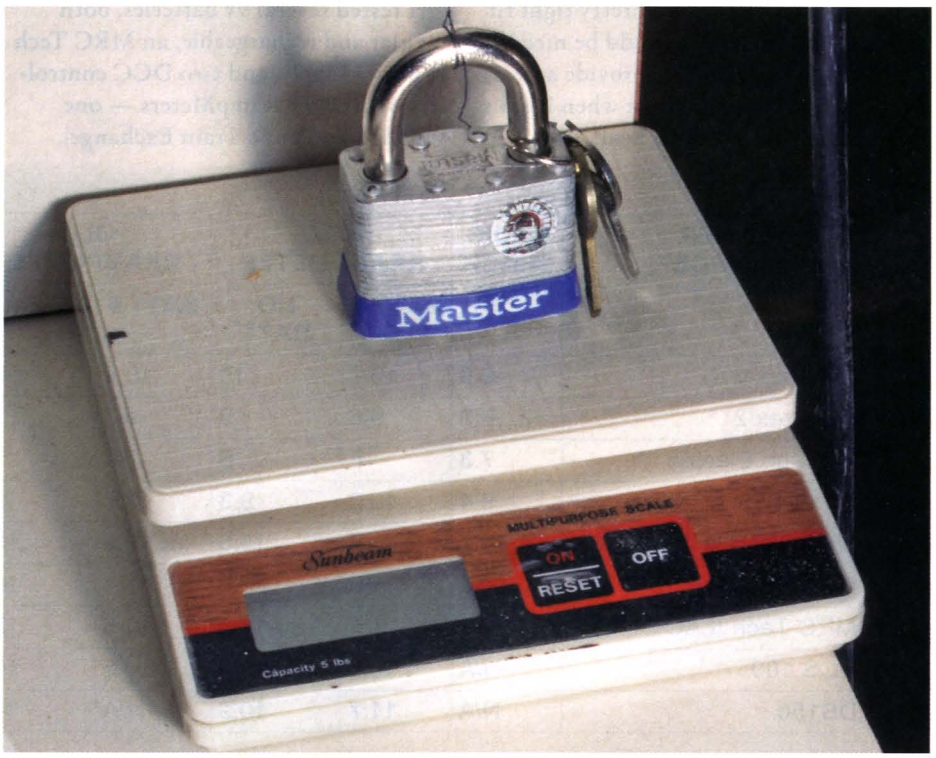
with the product, but Tony's website offers the following satisfaction guarantee: "Whatever you buy from us, if you do not like it, send it back for your refund or exchange (subject to restock charge at discretion of Tony's Train Exchange)."

In analyzing the results of the testing I conducted, I found Tony and his engineer to be quite responsive and knowledgeable.

Final Thoughts

If all you need to measure is AC or DC voltage, a cheap, simple VOM will be all you need, and a lot cheaper. But if you don't like the dial twisting and leads reconfiguring to test amps as well, and the inability to test both at once, you'll appreciate the simplicity and flexibility of the RRampMeter. And if you want to test in a DCC environment, as well as the others, it's a real no-brainer.

I believe the objective of the product design — a simple to use, accurate tool — has certainly been met. Nothing could be simpler than placing the tool's contacts on the track rails and reading the voltage, without the need to turn dials, throw switches, or any other manipulations, whether testing AC, DC, or DCC. Even the ability to measure both volts and amps at the same time without reconfiguring, is the essence of simplicity. It's a quality product at a good price, and well worth your consideration.



The scale can be set to zero with the weight placed on it. Then as power is applied to the locomotive, it tries to raise the weight, and the tractive effort in fractions of ounces can be read on the scale, and the applicable voltage and amperage from the RRampMeter.

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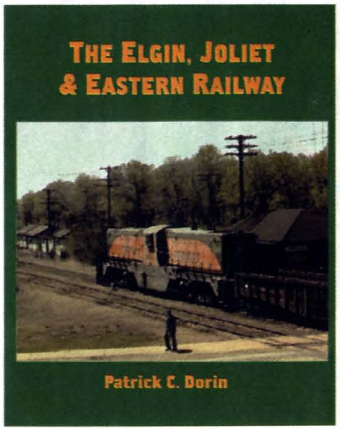

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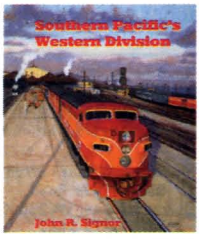

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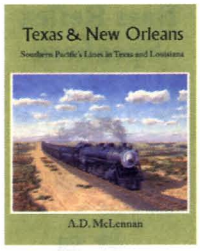

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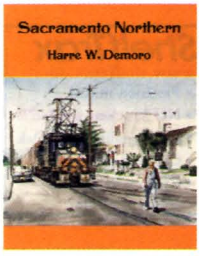

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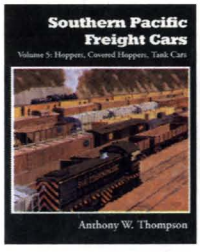

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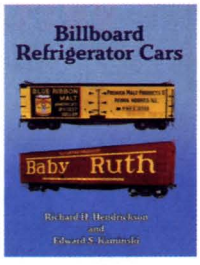

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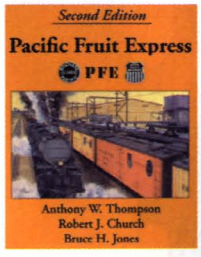

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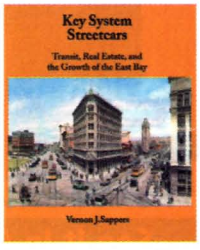

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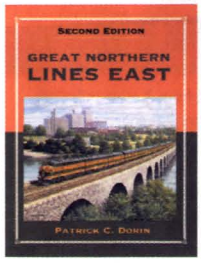

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The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, and 'Jungle Jack Hanna' stage the well-known 'WildLights' G-scale Model Train Display each year from November through January. The Central Ohio Model Railroad Club builds each season's layout. Bob Chapman explains how it all works and why Digitrax is there:

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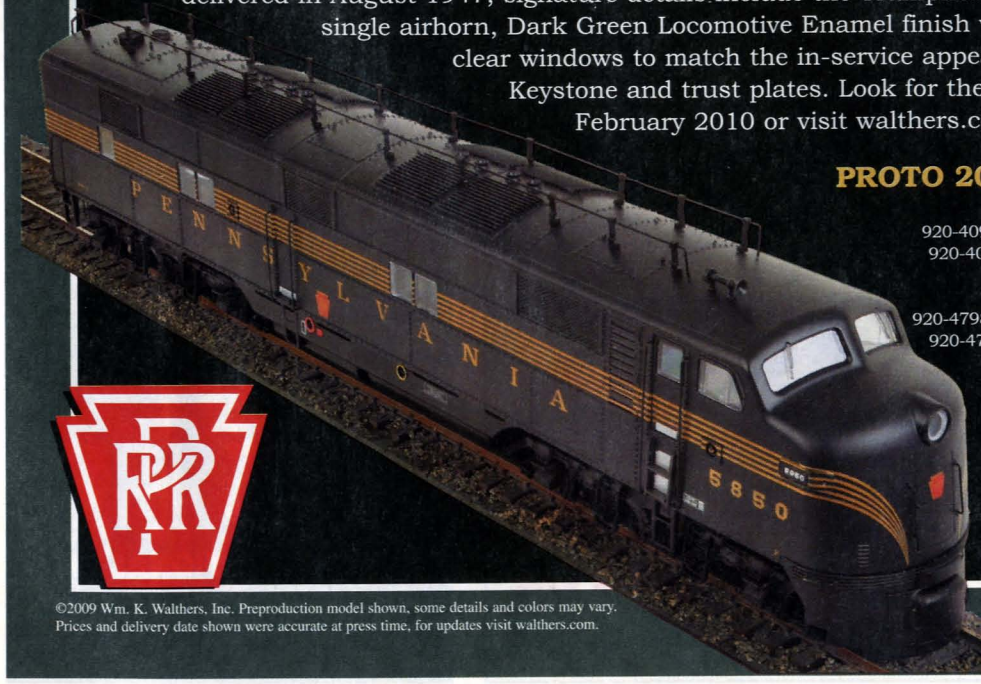

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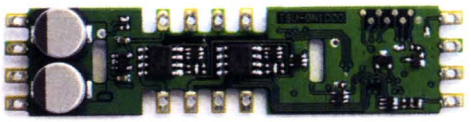
SoundTraxx announces Tsunami TSU-GN1000 sound decoder for Athearn Genesis diesel locomotives



DCC — SoundTraxx has released their new Tsunami TSU-GN100 plug and play Digital Sound Decoder for Athearn Genesis Diesel locomotives. The decoder is designed to fit all Athearn Genesis HO diesel models that do not have a stall current exceeding 1 amp.

Tsunami decoders are designed to replace the light board that comes in Athearn Genesis HO diesel engines. The TSU-GN1000 integrates digital sound, four Hyperlight lighting effects, and a DCC decoder into a single, miniature electronic module, and is compatible with the NMRA DCC standards and Recommended Practices. While it will also operate on a DC-powered layout using a conventional power pack, its true capabilities can best be experienced during DCC operation.

Each TSU-GN1000 contains a 16-bit digital sound system, with a 1-watt audio amplifier as well as independent, adjustable volume controls, and a built in equalizer. Tsunami TSU-GN1000 decoders have up to fourteen functions and over fourteen individual sounds.

Each decoder includes all the airhorns appropriate to the prototype, in most cases up to sixteen in each version. Along with the long horn, a short horn control allows the user to produce the short, crisp toot needed for many common whistle signals. Sound effects such as airhorn, bell, engine startup, engine exhaust, engine shutdown, dynamic brakes, air compressor, brake squeal, coupler, and more are included. Initial prime movers offered include EMD 567, 645, 710, and GE FDL-16.

Each Tsunami's four-function outputs can be independently set to any of SoundTraxx's 14 different Hyperlight lighting effects; which also include a choice of directional or Rule 17 lighting control, grade crossing timers, and an adjustable flash rate. Tsunami provides a unique LED Brightness Correction control mode that allows the user to compensate for the output differences that typically occur between incandescent bulbs and LEDs. The TSU-GN1000 has all of the necessary hardware built into the circuit board to accommodate the easy use of 1.5 Volt bulbs without using any external resistors. The TSU-GN1000 has a suggested list price of $99.95.

SoundTraxx, 210 Rock Point Dr, Durango, CO 81301-7744; 970-259-0690; Fax: 970-259-0691; E-mail: nw@soundtraxx.com; www.soundtraxx.com

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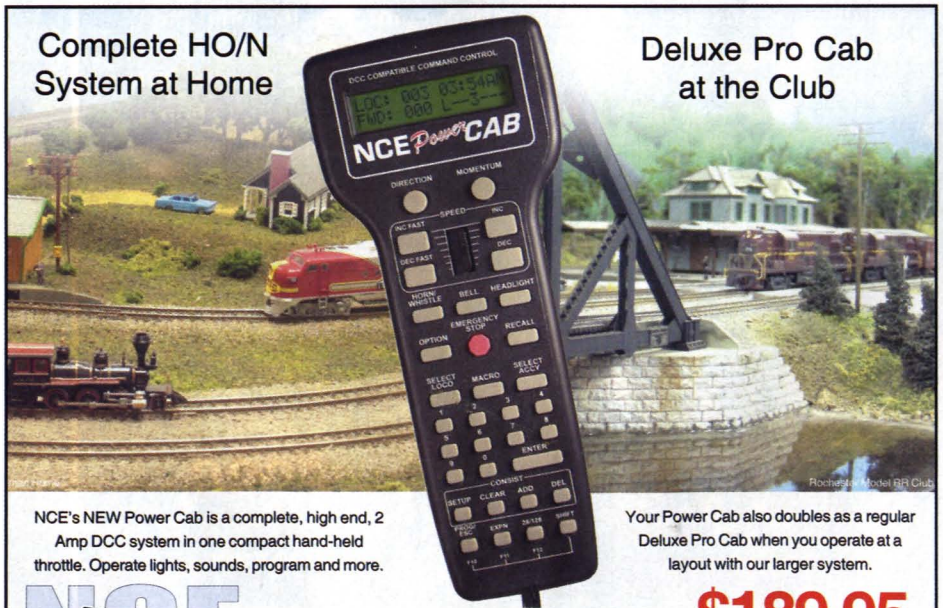

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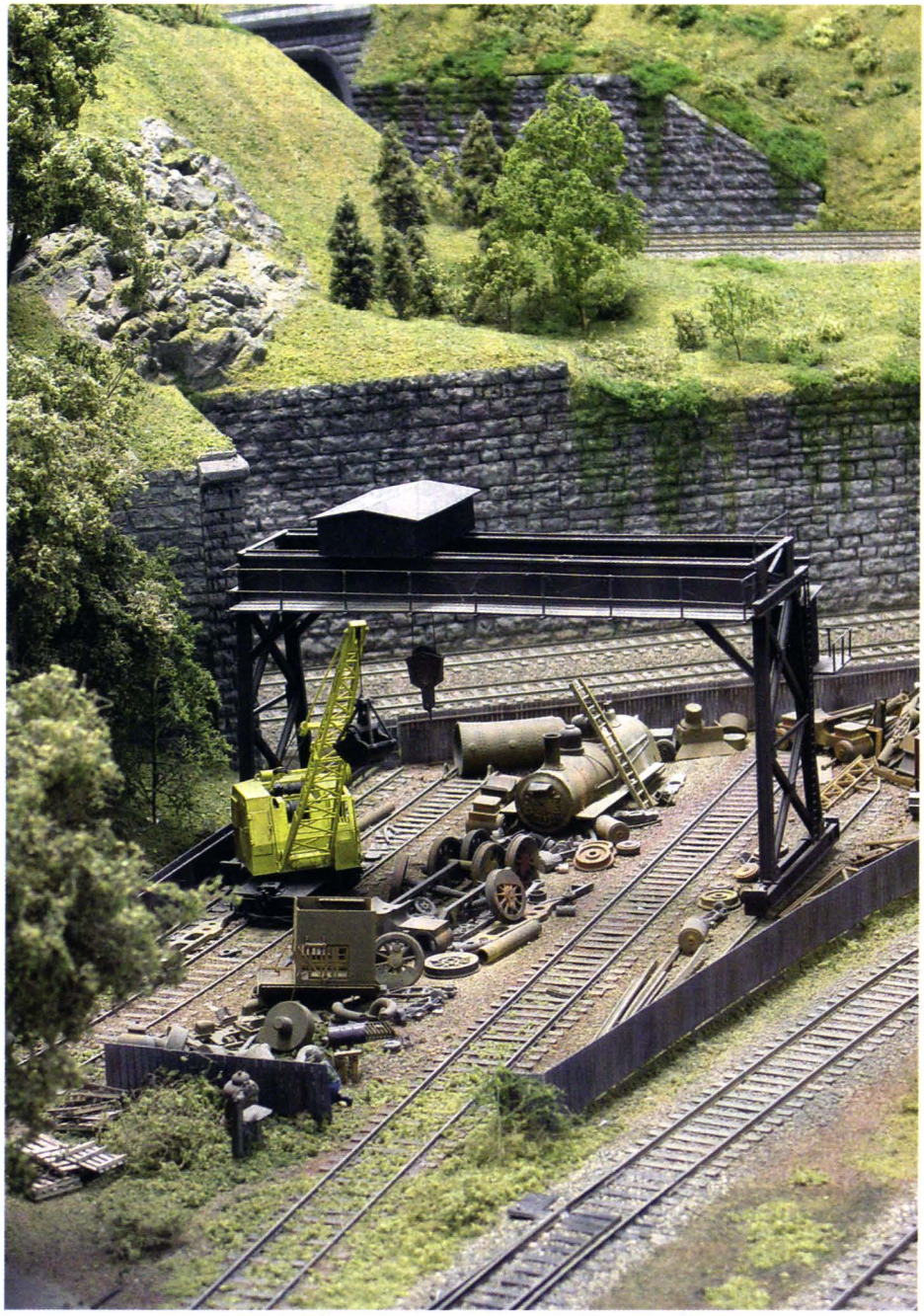

Nearly every modeler's junk drawer contains material worthy of a well-stocked junkyard. But it's the total vegetation coverage that makes this junkyard scene really "pop." The gantry crane was built from a Lehigh Valley Models kit; the yellow burro crane is a River Raisin import.

CURVES
FOR AND ABOUT S-GAUGE MODEL RAILROADING
A column by Dick Karnes

Trading Stock

LOTS of us have a dream layout in mind but never get very far with it. Often we finish the trackwork, and sometimes the wiring. But actually finishing — Scenery, people, hills, rivers, vehicles, trees, all sorts of detritus? Layouts that are actually finished are rare indeed. Mostly we operate the Plywood Central or the Two-by-Four Midland.

But there's hope! Nearly all of us have a rather large cache of kits and supplies that we'll never exhaust, acquired over years of impulse buying. ("I'd better buy that before they're no longer made.") Most of us never in our lifetimes make much of a dent in this stash. If we get to the point of actually building a layout, there's a large gulf between the sort of stuff we've acquired and what we actually need for the layout concept we've settled on.

Well, my friend Ed Loizeaux has solved this problem in a very beneficial, egalitarian way. He has used his unused stock of models and kits to complete his rather large S-scale New York Central railroad without actually incorporating them on his layout. What he's done is very simple: He traded kits and supplies for labor and completed models that he needed.

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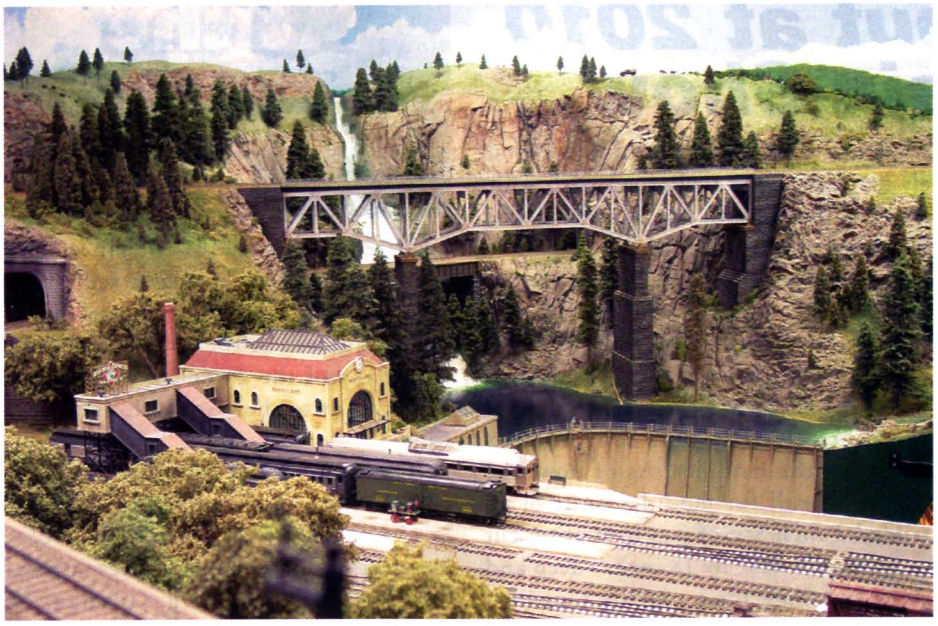
Two versions: #HR2098 DCC Ready #4007 and #HR2099 DCC/Sound Equipped #4014
Details include metal handrails, 5 pole motor w/flywheel, operating headlight



This remarkable scene represents the work of Ed Loizeaux and a lot of his friends. The bridge is a Don Ledger model; the backdrop and much of the scenery are by Mike Kotowsky. The station, which has full interior detail, is scratchbuilt. There is some ballasting work yet to be done in the rail yard in the right foreground.

that you really want to put on your layout but don't have the time to build it? Ask a fellow modeler if any of your stash would be acceptable in trade for his/her labor. Need an expert to do your signal wiring? Make a deal for a brass SP cab-forward loco that doesn't fit your operating scheme. Need to get all those reefers built, each with a different number? Find out what your fastest model-building buddy would like from that pile of stuff under your layout, and make a deal.

Ed's New York Central represents the efforts of perhaps two-dozen or more expert craftsmen and artists. The result, as you can see from the photos, is striking. And the clutter of stashed supplies is, well, gone!

How do you find people to trade with? Join affinity e-lists, like the Yahoo S-Scale e-group. Go to model railroad meets where modelers in your scale are likely to congregate. For S scale, there are the annual events: the NASG National Convention, the Sn3 Symposium, the Fall S Fest and Spring S Spree, and O/S West. Make friends with people, get to know them and what they do, what they like, what they need. Help each other. Trade labor and/or goods. You'll realize your dream a lot faster, and you'll make a lot of other people happy too — not just the people you trade with, but also your significant other. ("Can't you get that stuff out of here? You'll never use it!")

—

Feel free to e-mail any comments or questions about S scale in general to scurves@modelrailroadnews.com or snail-mail them to S-Curves, Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080. Suggestions, contributions, and announcements are all welcome.

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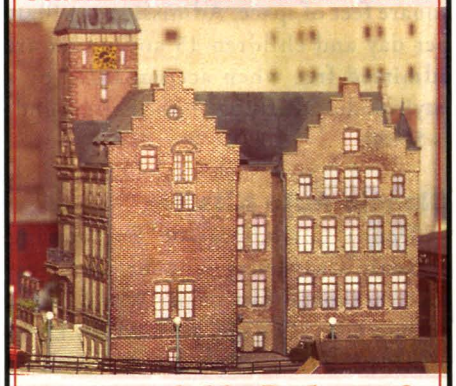

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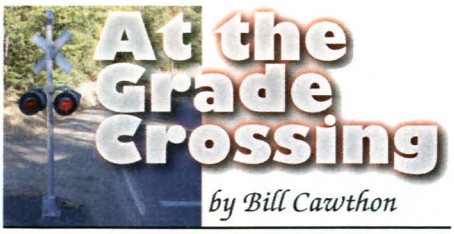
A Major Debut at 2010 Amherst Train Show



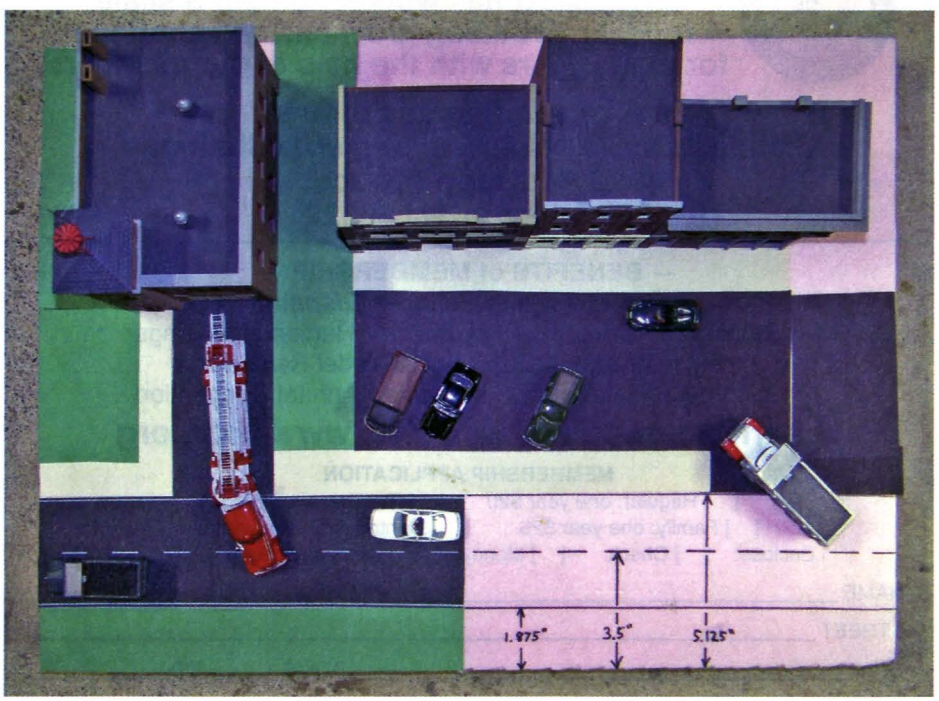
It's my favorite time of the year; the days leading up to the winter holidays. While you can count on one hand the number of times it has snowed in the thirty years I have lived on the Texas Gulf Coast, the feeling is still the same as when I lived in southwestern New England.

A New Standard

In last month's column, I mentioned that the 1/87 Vehicle Club would be participating in the Amherst Railway Society's Railroad Hobby Show in West Springfield, Massachusetts. What I didn't mention is the club will be introducing a new modular display system called Route 87. Modular layouts are nothing new for model railroaders: it's been 35 years since the late Ben Davis and the members of the Belmont Shore Railroad Club introduced NTrak, but there has never been a standard for displaying railroad-scale vehicle models. At most shows and meets, the models are simply displayed on a tabletop or small diorama. Now, thanks to the efforts of a number of club members, especially Ralph Ratcliffe, who built the first trial modules, attendees at shows will have a chance to see some of the awesome models displayed on a scale road with scale scenery. Better still, the models will be displayed at a better viewing height, reducing the need to bend over to see the detail.

Just as in model railroading, Route 87 modules will adhere to a set of standards including module size and location of "Main Street" that runs continuously across all the modules. As of now, the standards call for modules built of extruded 2-inch Styrofoam insulation cut to 24 inches wide by 18 inches deep and stack two high for a roughly four-inch height. The main road is Busch 9710 self-adhesive road film with the center stripe 3.75 inches from the front of the module. There is some discussion about having a "highway" with two strips of Busch road film separated by a one-inch median but, as of the time I am writing this, that has not been settled. As is true with model railroad modules, what goes on behind the roadway is up to the individual. Considering the number of models some members will have to display, I would imagine there will be plenty of parking lots.

And those roads and parking lots will be filled with some of the finest HO vehicle models you will ever see. Superdetailed cars, trucks, buses, and heavy equipment will be there for the viewing, and many of the modelers will also be there, ready to share some tips and techniques.



This is an evaluation Route 87 module built by Ralph Ratcliffe. Ralph left the right end of the Busch 9710 road film off to show the suggested measurements. As you can see, the 18-inch depth allows for the addition of buildings and other scenery items as well as plenty of parking. Ralph Ratcliffe photo.

The Route 87 is exciting because it brings scale vehicle model displays to a level not usually seen outside of professional trade shows like the International Toy Fair in Nuremberg, Germany. A number of people, like Chester Fesmire, are not only skilled vehicle modelers, they also build exquisite dioramas and scenery. It's always a treat to see the latest miniature masterpieces they create.

The 2010 Amherst Railway Society's Railroad Hobby Show takes place January 30 and 31 at the Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds on Memorial Avenue in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Since its humble beginnings as a club event in the late 1960s, the show has grown to become one of America's premier model railroad exhibitions with over 300,000 square feet of space. Admission is $10.00 per day and children 15 and under are admitted free when accompanied by a paying adult. Parking on the Fairgrounds is $5.00.

Classic Auto Kits

Dennis Clark, Dean of "Engineering" at **Scale University** sent me some very nice cast metal kits of pre-World War I automobiles. The kits are made by Dyna-Models and they are produced in limited quantities.

At the moment, the selection includes a 1911 Maxwell AB runabout, a 1914 Stutz Bearcat and a 1916 Packard Twin Six Touring Car. Maxwell, a brand made famous by comedian Jack Benny, was the predecessor of the Chrysler Corporation. The company was founded in 1904 as the Maxwell-Briscoe Company by Jonathan Dixon Maxwell and Benjamin Briscoe who was one of the real pioneers of the auto industry in America. Three years later, the company moved from Tarrytown, New York to New Castle,

Paul Knowles built this 130 ton Kershaw crane starting with the Custom Finishings kit. He says it was basically built out of the box. Paul added Dennis Aust's wide front tires and used A-Line wheels and tires on the rear. The detachable tag axle on the rear is another Dennis Aust item. Paul finished the models with decals from Oddballs. Photo by Paul Knowles.

Indiana and set up shop in what was then the largest automotive manufacturing plant in the world. In 1913, the firm was purchased by Walter Flanders and moved to Detroit. At the time, Maxwell was one of the top car brands in America. By the early 1920s, the company was in trouble and ex-railroad man Walter P. Chrysler was brought over from Buick to salvage what he could. The Maxwell car line went out of production in 1925 when the company began producing Chrysler-badged vehicles.

Harry Stutz founded the Ideal Motor Company in 1911 and renamed the company after himself the following year when he introduced the Bearcat. The low-slung Bearcat became a force in racing, winning 25 of the 30 races in which is was entered, and set a new cross-country record with Erwin "Cannon Ball" Baker at the wheel. The Bearcat was only produced from 1912 to 1914 but its fame and image survived the end of production. My grandfather once drove a Stutz Bearcat through a small Texas town at top speed, knowing the policemen on their motorcycles were powerless to catch him.

Packard is a name that is still well known today. For decades, Packard was the premier American luxury automotive brand. It wasn't until after World War II that Cadillac was able to surpass Packard in sales. Packard was established as the Ohio Automobile Company in 1900 by James Ward Packard, his brother William Doud Packard, and George Lewis Weiss. The Packard brothers had already built their first cars in 1899 determined to build an automobile superior to those available in those days. Packard cars soon acquired a reputation for engineering innovation and quality and became popular among the wealthy. Packard lasted longer than either Maxwell or Stutz, but management mistakes in the postwar era doomed it and the brand ended its days in 1958 as a rebadged Studebaker.

The term "kits," though technically accurate, is a bit misleading. The bodies, interiors, and chassis are a single casting that comes cleaned up and pre-painted. The modeler only needs to add the wheels, steering wheel, and, depending on the kit, a windshield and folded top. Everything is supplied and assembly is easy. About the most challenging part is cutting the supplied clear plastic to the proper size for the windshield.

I used gel-type ACC to assemble the parts after using a pair of rail nippers to cut the axles and steering shaft to size. I discovered that the holes in the wheels were too small for the supplied axles so I also used a jeweler's drill bit in a pin vise to enlarge the holes slightly so the axles would fit better. All told, each kit took about 30 minutes to complete. The one problem I encountered was the front wheels on the Maxwell; they are too big to fit under the fenders. It takes some finagling to get them into position and the wheels won't rotate, but that's probably not a problem for a model that will be placed on a layout.

Incidentally, Dyna-Models includes windshield material for the 1911 Maxwell but the photos I found of the prototype show the car didn't have one. The Stutz didn't have one, either. Windshields were often optional equipment back in those days.

The finished products are quite nice and, overall, I was pleased with the way everything went together. I am not usually a fan of cast-metal kits because of all the preparatory work that needs to be done before the parts are ready to be as-

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The 1945 Cummins-powered Mack FCSW water truck is the work of Joe Enriquez, an extremely talented modeler whose work is featured in Sherline Tools Internet Craftsmanship Museum. Ralph Ratcliffe, a skilled modelmaker in his own right, mastered the Cummins HBDS-600 supercharged diesel engine and the Don Mills resin kit for the cab, wheels, and suspension. Everything else is scratchbuilt from Evergreen Styrene and brass. Joe weathered the model with AIM powders. Photo by Joe Enriquez.

sembled, but these were quite a treat and they will make excellent additions to a layout set in the teens, twenties or thirties.

As mentioned earlier, the supply of these models is limited so you might want to check the Scale University website. Dennis Clark also mentioned that future models will include a 1908 Buick and 1909 Stanley Steamer.

One note before I go: Adam Tager of **Model Power** took me to task over mentioning that **High Speed** is producing the Mini vehicle models. And he is correct in that I usually don't mention the actual factory various companies use to produce their products. The reason for the exception is it has been pretty well known in the scale vehicle world that High Speed produces diecast vehicles sold under a variety of brands in various parts of the world, including Model Power, **Schuco**, and others. High Speed is one of the top producers of top-quality HO-scale models of any of the Chinese diecast companies. However, there have been difficulties in the past regarding some of High Speed's business practices and I have always supported Model Power's position with regards to those (I still do).

To set the record straight once and for all, Model Power created and owns the tooling for the Mini Exclusive models and has not designated anyone as an exclusive supplier. Model Power is also the judge of the standards of quality for these models and I think they have done, and will continue to do, a fine job of bringing reasonably priced HO-scale models to model railroaders.

Adam also asked me to let everyone know that future runs of the nifty 1970 'Cuda model will be produced with and without the rear window slats.

Best wishes for a happy holiday season. Be safe and watch the eggnog if you're out. If you can, please share your holidays with those less fortunate. Millions of Americans are facing difficult times and the help you can provide through your church or synagogue, food banks, and donations to organizations like Toys for Tots can provide some joy at a time when it's needed most.

If you have questions or comments for Bill Cawthon about model vehicles, e-mail them to: Gradecrossing@modelrailroadnews.com or snail-mail them to Grade Crossing, Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080.

Mentioned in this month's column:

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Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show
www.railroadhobbyshow.com

Route 87
www.route87.org

1/87 Vehicle Club
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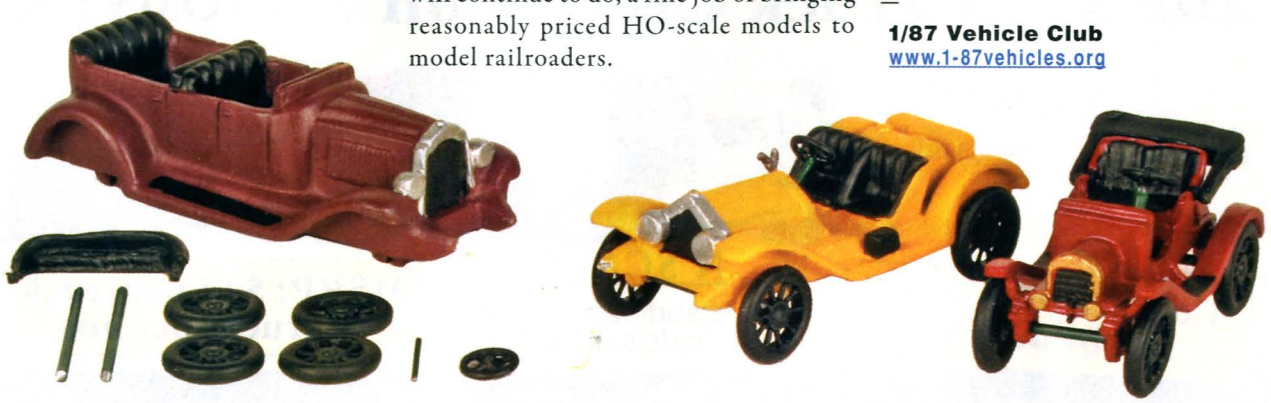

The Dyna-Model kits from Scale University are nice replicas of hard-to-find automobiles from the early Twentieth Century. The one-piece bodies come pre-painted but the user must assemble the wheels, axles, steering wheel, and such. After a little prep work on the wheels, the kits went together quickly. Model Railroad News photo.

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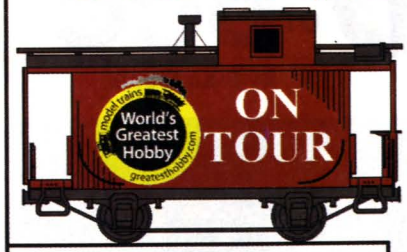

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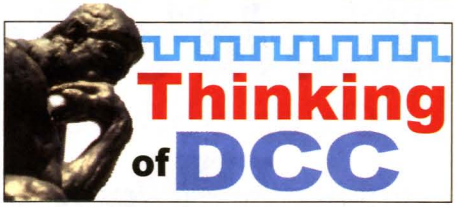
Making The Change

Converting your layout to DCC



By John Sipple

What's involved?

The answer to the question depends upon how your layout is wired. Most small, home layouts have a single power controller connected via two wires, one to each rail. If that describes your layout, then conversion to DCC is quick and easy. Simply connect the two track wires to the "track" terminals on your DCC system. At that point, you are ready to run — but what will you run?

Any new locomotive that comes equipped with a DCC decoder should have a from-the-factory address of "03." Select Loco 03 on your system and off you go! A few locos come with the cab number as their address, but the packaging usually makes this very clear. If you have more than one DCC locomotive, you'll probably want to change the address from 03 to the loco's roadnumber. More about that later.

If you have a bunch of older locomotives without DCC decoders, that doesn't mean you've closed them off the home tracks. In fact, you have a couple of choices. Those who are converting to DCC probably have a good DC power controller, and you can install a heavy-duty double pole, double throw, center off (DPDTCO) electrical switch. Radio Shack and other electronics supply stores usually sell them at a very reasonable price. This switch connects the tracks to the common center terminals while the DCC is connected to one end while the DC is connected to the other.

Now you can easily switch back and forth between DC and DCC, so you can run your old friends on DC until (or if) you choose to convert them. Last month, we dug into the issue of selecting a priority for converting your existing fleet from DC to DCC. Along the way, we learned that such conversion does not stop them from being used on DC track power. Most modern DCC decoders include the ability to run on DC power. They have a programmable ability to work that way or not, as you choose, but most come from the factory ready to operate under DC, if asked. The conversion is automatic, so whatever power you give it, it responds in kind.

What if I convert my layout to DCC but I still want to run some DC locos?

There is a trick that DCC can play, if your system allows it. Basically, you set the address of your DCC throttle to Address Zero (0), and a DC locomotive will be operable under DCC. More than one DC loco can be operated at the same time, creating a locomotive consist, or the Zero address can be consisted with a DCC address so they can be run together. How well they are matched will determine how successful this turns out to be.

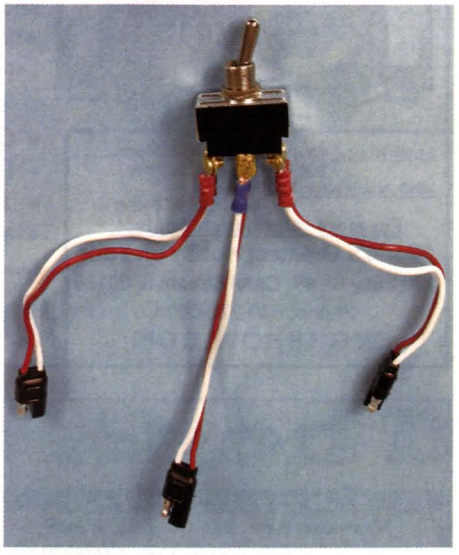
We have to understand the rules of this wizardry before we get started. DCC track power is typically around 15 to 16 volts AC for HO scale. Unlike house current that changes polarity 60 times per second, the frequency of the DCC power is both higher and variable. Zero Addressing is also called "Zero Stretching" because one pole of the AC current is shorter than the other, and so the motor in the locomotive "sees" power that is biased more in one direction than the other. This causes the loco to move in the direction you've selected.

The problem with Zero Addressing is that the power on the track, if it isn't stretched, can damage a DC motor if allowed to sit there too long. As a rule, most DC locos will hum when sitting on live DCC power, a sign that its armature is oscillating back and forth very quickly instead of turning. Many motors will burn out in fairly short order if left in this situation.

Of the basic four American major DCC system makers in North America, two of them (MRC and NCE) don't support Zero Addressing specifically out of concern for safe operation. Digitrax and Lenz both support Zero Stretching, so if you wish to have that feature, go with one of the makers that supports it.

What's it like to go DCC?

I'll admit I was very nervous when I first set out to try the process. I had a Digitrax Zephyr, a very good, entry-level system, around sixty DC HO locomotives, and a brand new Broadway Limited J1e Hudson with Sound/DC/DCC installed. My DC layout was a two-cab set up with lots of double-switched blocks. I set up one switch for Cab B, the DCC side, railed up the locomotive, selected Address 03, and advanced the throttle. I got sound, lights, and movement, and I was instantly hooked!

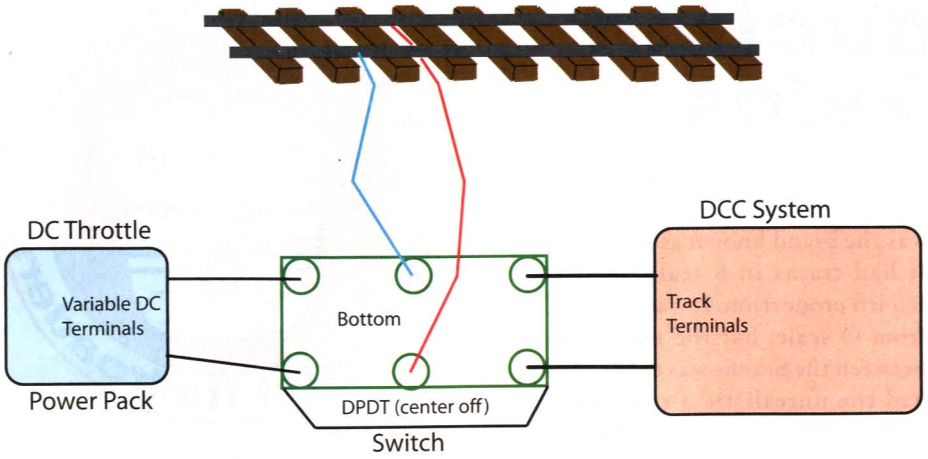


This is a good example of the heavy-duty switch I use. In this case, it is fitted with auto trailer 2-pin connectors with the center going to its mate on the tracks while the one on the left is for the DC throttle pack and the one on the right connects the DCC system. Later, if you feel you won't be switching back to DC anymore, simply connect the track to the DCC and take the switch out!

Later, I tried Zero Addressing on an older GP9, hearing the little motor hum until I advanced the throttle. Since then, I've used Zero Addressing often. To be fair, I've also flipped the track power switch to run models under DC, mostly for review testing. I've also converted some two hundred DC locomotives to DCC operation over the past seven years. However, two thirds of the original 60 never got converted and never will.

My advice for the new DCC operator is to start small and take it easy. After the first run of the BLI Hudson under the Zephyr, I didn't suddenly jump into programming, conversions, signaling, or computer operation. For a couple of months, I just ran that Hudson, blew its whistle, rang its bell, and enjoyed the magic of it. Then I took the bull by the horns and changed the address from 03 to 5344 so I could run another DCC locomotive. Most modern DCC systems set forth a procedure for how to do this, so read that section carefully and ask for help if you need it.

After seven years, I'm still learning and growing. Arthur C. Clarke, the great sci-



This sort of switch arrangement can be a great comfort to the new DCC user who has a bunch of DC locomotives that may have him returning to DC frequently at first. Using an inexpensive Double-Pole, Double-Throw, Center Off (SPSTCO) switch, you can easily flip back and forth between systems. This single switch will handle a modest-sized layout.

ence fiction author, wrote, "Any technology, sufficiently advanced, is indistinguishable from magic." DCC isn't magic, but it adds a magical property to operations. Be clear, however. While you can install a switch to select DC or DCC, there is no switch that will take you quickly from knowing very little about DCC all the way to being an expert. If you decide to go DCC, plan to enjoy the journey and be patient about arriving at the destination. Hmmm. That's the same advice I give to train travelers!

—

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TONY'S TRAIN XCHANGE

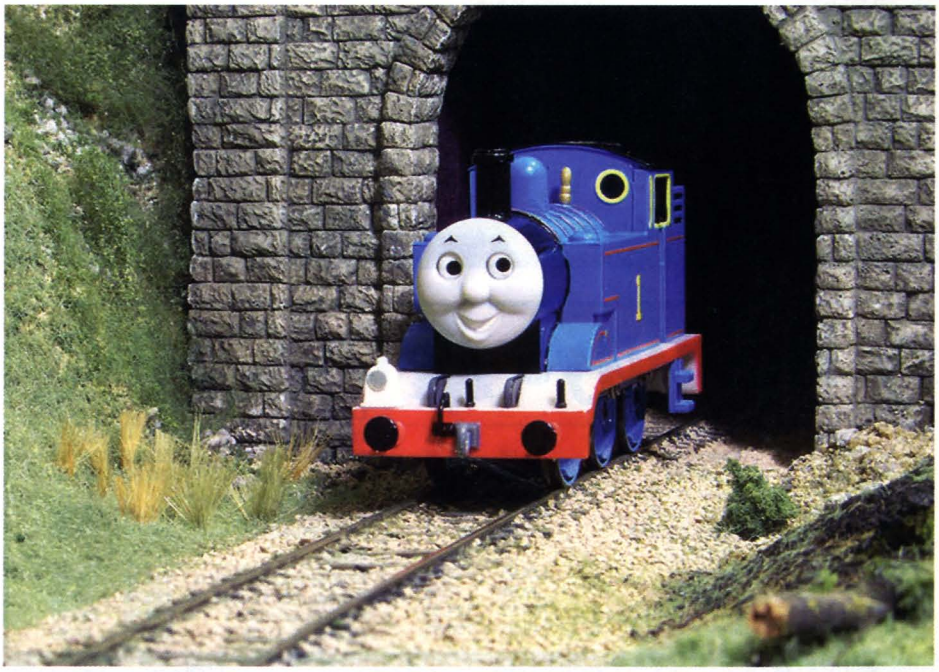
First Introduction to Model Trains

BY JEFFREY ANDRESKI — With Christmas and other holidays around the corner, who can argue that this isn't the best time of the year? Thoughts of model-train-related gifts are running through my head, which got me thinking. The one thing that most model railroaders have in common is their story of how they were first introduced to model trains and this great hobby. Ask any model railroader how they got their start and many will tell you that it was a train set under a Christmas tree when they were little. While times are hard for a lot of people, you can always look back and reflect on past enjoyment in the hobby.

This being the December issue, this month's column will focus on common first experiences with model trains and specifically how I got my start in model railroading. Many years ago, almost every boy had a train set under his Christmas tree. Back then it usually started with a wind-up tin plate train set. Then it would move up to a real train set. That was the best gift that a kid could hope for on Christmas morning, and is inevitably how many of today's model railroaders got their start with electric trains.

In those days, Lionel was the "King of Trains." That was the present that every young boy wanted. Besides Lionel, there was the brand known as American Flyer. It had trains in S scale, which had a 1/64th proportion. It was quite different from O scale, but the main difference between the brands was the track. Lionel had the unrealistic 3-rail track, while American Flyer had only a 2-rail design. Parents usually made the choice of what brand their kids got started in, but for most model railroaders, after the first train set, it didn't stop there. The basic set was expanded one locomotive, car, or accessory at a time until it could be considered a complete layout.

Nowadays with many other things besides trains on kids' wish lists, trains aren't the "must have" they used to be. But the next generation of active model railroaders, those being in their teens, had things different growing up. In the early nineties and continuing today, the Thomas the Tank Engine phenomenon introduced to many an interest in toy trains. It started with a television show in 1989. Thomas-related products and new TV and movie episodes continue to be marketed today. So now, more than ever, kids are getting introduced to trains and model trains thanks to "Thomas."



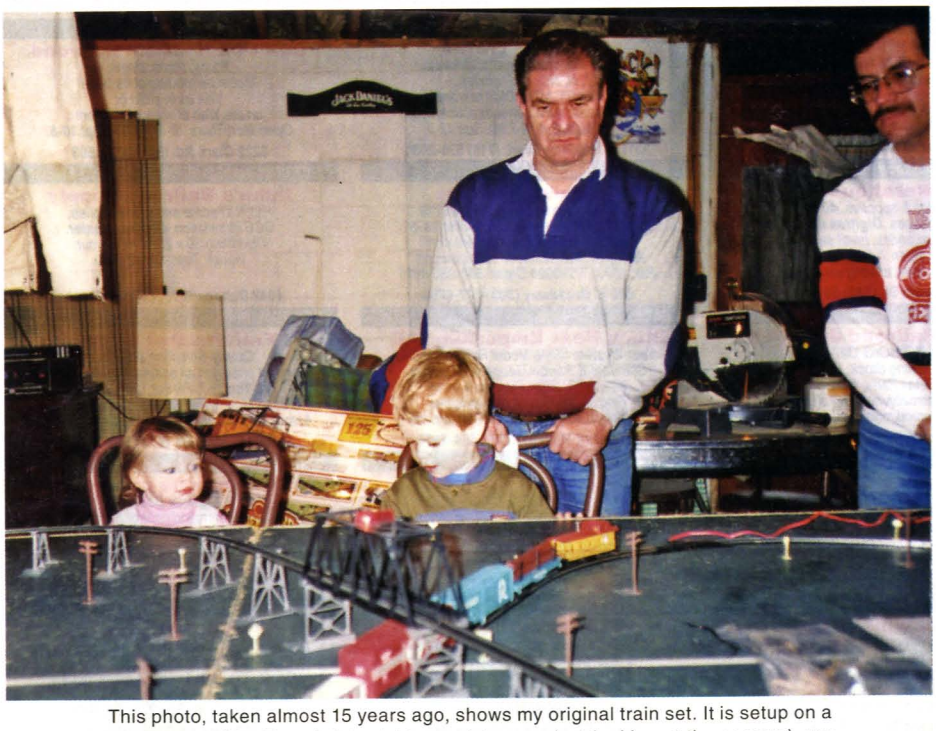
A Bachmann HO-scale Thomas, is coming out of a tunnel on my layout. My brothers have many items from Bachmann's Thomas the Tank Engine line, which seems to keep expanding every year to include more familiar items. Thomas the Tank Engine introduces children to trains at an early age.

My beginning interest in trains goes back almost 15 years. While this may not seem like a long time to many modelers, I'm only 17, so you can't really expect it to go back much further. My first introduction to model trains was Christmas of 1994. That year I received a Bachmann HO-scale train set from my Grandpa, the day after I turned three. It was a figure-eight bridge set with an unrealistic looking GP-40 loco in a gold UP paint scheme. I never really had a train to play with before then besides a large wooden circus train. An HO-scale set probably wasn't the best gift to give a kid my age. I know that my dad wanted to exchange the set for something larger like an O-scale Lionel set, but that exchange never happened. Being only three, I wasn't the one who was going to be setting up the track. I needed help.

Roadbed Track

Fifteen years ago, one thing that sets didn't come with was track with plastic-molded roadbed attached to it (now almost all train sets come with some sort of roadbed track). The problem with this regular HO-scale track was that every time a train went over a joint it would move and it would eventually derail. This meant that the track needed to be nailed down in a few locations, which made temporary set-ups difficult at best. Also, the only place you could put the track was on hard flat surface such as a large table. In my case, an old ping-pong table served as the tracks' base.

At that time, Kato's Unitrack was the only track with built-in roadbed. However, it was rather hard to come by, being that it was from a Japanese manufacturer. I wish Bachmann had released their E-Z-Track a few years earlier than



This photo, taken almost 15 years ago, shows my original train set. It is setup on a ping-pong table. From left to right: my sister, me (not looking at the camera), my Grandpa, and my Dad at the controls of the train. Photo by Paula Andreski.

they did, because that would have been great for me to begin with model trains. Because of space constraints, setup and takedown time, and the difficulty of keeping the train running, my set was only assembled for operation a couple times. Most of these problems could have been avoided if I'd had roadbed track, because it could be set up anywhere, including on the carpet — something unheard of using regular sectional track. (While you can run track with roadbed on a rug or carpeting, it's still a good idea to get trains off the floor.)

Now, with Life-Like's Power-Loc track you can lift an entire loop of track up and even hang the track on the wall because it's so sturdy. After the short occurrences of my train set being setup, the space and area to set it back up didn't come back into existence until over seven years later when I was ten. During those seven years, I always liked looking at the nice packaging of my train set in the back of my closet, wishing I could run a train.

But I wasn't completely without trains for that time, in fact, far from it. Starting when I was five, I started receiving diecast metal Thomas the Tank Engine locomotives with plastic rolling stock and tracks manufactured by ERTL. Besides that type, I also had the wooden and battery-powered versions of Thomas. Every Christmas and birthday my sister and I would get some more items to add to our Thomas collection. The scale size of these items seems to be similar to N scale 1/160, but they were just standard push along trains. One thing that I would do was to take all the track that we had and try to use it to make the biggest track network I could. So that's how I was able to keep my interest in trains going.

My layout, if you can call it that, when I was eleven. Everyone has a first layout and this was mine. It includes mainly Life-Like structures, grass mat, trees, and accessories. It also has a couple of cardboard structures. My track isn't nailed down, but that soon changed after the train would derail from the track moving after every couple rounds.

Space for a Layout

Then when I was ten, and after a move into a new house, there was finally space in my room to have a 4 x 8 sheet of plywood set up to run my original train set on. But after I got my 4 x 8 foot sheet of plywood up and set up the figure 8 with a bridge. It was fun to race the train around, except that I needed to nail down some of the track to keep the train from taking a dive off the bridge. But after a while I got bored watching one train going around on a single track and having no variations. Then, I purchased a box of train stuff from a local thrift shop. This added some brass switches and track to my original steel track. The box also had a bunch of additional cars and a few locomotives that didn't run very well.

Then came a trip to Caboose Hobbies in Denver. As almost any model railroader knows, when you step into a large train store, you just want to buy the entire store. I settled on several building kits, a signal set, a couple remote control turnouts, and a grass mat. I was all set to make a cool looking layout, or so I thought. I enjoyed building the structures, but they didn't turn out as nicely as I thought they would. I guess that was to be expected. I also made the mistake of buying the wrong type of grass mat. It was cheaper than a felt-like mat but constantly shed material.

All new modelers make mistakes, and I am no exception. This is my story of how I was introduced to Model Railroading. I am sure that it shares similarities with other modelers, but ultimately we all have our own unique story. Even though my start in the hobby was a little unsettled, it proves that if you really want to do something, you can.

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If you have any questions, comments, tips, or suggestions concerning this column or model railroading in general, send them to: The Future of Model Railroading, c/o Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080 or e-mail to: tamr@modelrailroadnews.com

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HO 4 SALE: Locos, pass and frt cars, decals, books, DVDs, & videos. F. Cesefske, 4049 Pine Grove Ave., Fort Gratiot, MI 48059.

FOR SALE: 1:87 Malibu Int'l semi trucks & cars w/ trailers. $3.25 - $4 each. E-mail: texas-pacific@sbcglobal.net

HO SCALE Big bargain time. My eyes are poor, so it has to go. Call (702) 871-0620 to obtain your lifetime bargain.

WANTED: NMRA Heritage car 16 Moonlight & Violins will trade #1 or #2 or others or pay?? E-mail: bill@yaquina.com

WANTED: Norwest Promodel Tank Car Kit. Prefer un-built. Call Bob, (305) 970-1152.

NCE POWER CAB: Mint condition, 28 functions; complete system — $150 OBO. E-mail me at: andrewhartley2000@yahoo.com

K-LINE 027: K2554-2102 NS MP-15 diesel eng. Dummy, non-powered. Like-New-IB $75 OBO. Pics. mkblk@verizon.net

LEGAL HO SCALE FOLK: Mint in the box, less than half retail price. Call Ian (702) 871-0620 – evenings, W. Coast.

MARKLIN: RET800, 348/1, 348/2, 348/4 – $700; (856) 429-0930; LGB track and rolling stock.

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NOTE:** Free Classified Ads are for NON-COMMERCIAL ADS ONLY, First Four Lines Only, Additional Lines are $1.50 Per Line, One Free Ad Per Issue, No Mail Order Ads. **Commercial Ads are $1.50 Per Line with a Four Line Minimum (Minimum $6.00)

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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Events for the February 2010 issue must be received by December 11th, 2009

Attn. Clubs & Show Sponsors — Place your FREE event announcement in front of thousands of readers! Let them know about your special event! Send your announcement to us at least three months prior to the event for maximum coverage. Write to: Events, c/o Model Railroad News, P.O. Box 1080, Merlin, OR 97532-1080. You can fax us your event at: (541) 955-0346; or e-mail: events@modelrailroadnews.com

Free trial subscription cards of Model Railroad News are available upon request for show and meet attendees. Call, fax, or e-mail for details.

Events & Activities can be viewed online at www.ModelRailroadNews.com

Alabama, Birmingham — The Smokey City Rails Model Railroad Club will be hosting their 2nd Annual Fall Model Train Show and Sale on December 5th, at the First Baptist Church of Zion City, 1104 Gene Reed Road. The hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions will include operating model railroad layouts, door prizes, and refreshments will be available. Admission: $5.00, adults; $2.00, children, 8-12 years old; under 8 years old admitted free. For more information, contact: Smokey City Rails Model Railroad Club, P. O. Box 94606, Birmingham, AL 35220; or you may call Sonny Burchfield, (205) 980-0611 between 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Central Standard Time only, please; e-mail: scrmrrc@aol.com - please put "SCR" or "Show" in the subject line; www.smokeycityrails.com

California, Menlo Park — The West Bay Model Railroad Association's Annual Christmas Show will be held on December 11, 12, and 13th, at the Model Railroad Building, located at Ravenswood Avenue and Merrill Street near the Menlo Park Train Station. Hours will be from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Friday; from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday; and from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include an operating layout with O, S, and HO Scale trains, a raffle for a new train set, and railroad memorabilia on display. Admission is free; donations greatly appreciated. For more information, call: The West Bay Model Railroad Association, (650) 322-0685; or visit: home.earthlink.net/~pesce/westbay.htm

Connecticut, Shelton — Classic Shows, LLC will be holding a Train and Toy Show on January 3rd, at the Courtyard by Marriott Shelton, 780 Bridgeport Avenue. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Admission: $5.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free with adult. For more information, call (203) 926-1327; or visit www.ClassicShowsLLC.com

Connecticut, Wallingford — Classic Shows, LLC will be holding a Train and Toy Show on December 20th, at Zandri's Stillwood Inn, 1074 South Colony Road. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Admission: $5.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free with adult. For more information, call (203) 926-1327; or visit www.ClassicShowsLLC.com

Indiana, Indianapolis — The Naptown & White River Model Railroad Club will be sponsoring their Indianapolis Model Railroad Train Show & Open House to be held on December 12th, at the Manual High School Gymnasium. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: $5.00, adults; Boy Scout & Cub Scouts in uniform admitted free with an adult; children 12 and under admitted free. Parking is free. For more information, contact: Steven Handly, 1314 E. Edgewood Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46227; (317) 786-8627; www.naptownrr.org

Maryland, Baltimore — The Baltimore Society of Model Engineers (BSME) will be celebrating its 77th year with Holiday Open House Shows on December 13th, and 27th, and on January 1, 3, 10, 17, 24, and 31st, at 225 W. Saratoga St, 3rd floor walkup. Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating trains and trolleys in HO and O scale, static model displays, railroad heralds, railroad artifacts, and Thomas the Tank models. Admission is free; donations greatly appreciated. For more information, call the club, (410) 859-4376 e-mail: bsme1932@yahoo.com; or visit: www.modelengineers.com

Maryland, Timonium — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held December 5-6, at the Maryland State Fairgrounds, 2200 York Road. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

Michigan, Orchard Lake — Saint Mary's Train Show will be held on December 6th, at Saint Mary's Athletic Complex, 3535 Indian Trail. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts. Admission: $5.00, adults; 12 and under admitted free. For more information, call Rob Goddard, (248) 683-0545.

New Jersey, Ho Ho Kus — The Ramapo Valley Model Railroad Club's Holiday Open House will be held December 12, 13 & 27, at 620 Cliff Street (inside the VFW Building). Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. each day. Admission: $4.00, adults; $1.00, children under 12; $10.00, family. For more information, contact: Dennis Alderman, 60 Andre Ave., Tappan, NY 10983; (845) 359-0746; e-mail: pm1222@verizon.net

New Jersey, North Haledon — The Model Engineers Railroad Club of North Jersey's 75 Anniversary - Annual Open House will be held December 4-6, and 11-13, at 569 High Mountain Road. Hours will be from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Fridays, and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Admission: $5.00, adults; children admitted free with adult. For more information, call Paul Harbord, (973) 427-4905 before 9:00 p.m.

New Jersey, North Haledon — The Garden State Model Railway Club's 52nd Annual Open House will be held December 4-6th, and December 11-13th, at 575 High Mountain Road. Open House hours will be from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Fridays, and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. Attractions will include prototypical and special steam and diesel powered trains, including our Santa Claus Express, running on the Club's HO layout, a real working railroad signal, and other displays. Children will have the opportunity to operate a scale locomotive and refreshments will be available. Admission: $5.00, adults; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, please contact: Rob Savino, (201) 387-8716; e-mail: Info@GSMRRClub.org; www.gsmrrclub.org

New Jersey, Richland — The Patcong Valley Model Rail Road Club's 25th Annual Model Railroad Open House will be held December 5-6, 12-13, and January 2-3, 9-10, 16-17, on the south side of Route 40 near mile marker 38.5 across the street from Richland Carpet. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Patcong Valley Model Rail Road is an HO-scale layout about 30 by 60 ft. in size, operating six to eight trains at a time with full sound using DCC technology. Admission is free. For more information, e-mail: patcongrr@comcast.net; or visit: www.patcongvalley.com

New Jersey, Somerset — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held January 16-17, at Garden State Exhibit Center, 50 Atrium Drive. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

New Jersey, Union — The Model Railroad Club, Inc. 2009 Annual Light & Sound Show will be held December 4-6 & 11-13, at the Club building, 295 Jefferson Avenue, off U.S. Route 22 east, (behind The Home Depot). Show hours will be from 12:00 noon to 10:00 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 27th; from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Dec. 4th & 7th; from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Saturdays, and from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sundays. Attractions to include HO and N scale layouts, a live steam display, a gift shop, and snack shop. Admission: $7.00, adults; $6.00, seniors over 59; $5.00, children under 16. Group rates available – see web site for details. Parking is free on site, which is wheelchair accessible. For more information, call (908) 964-8808 for recorded message, or visit: www.tmrci.org

New York, Albany — The Upstate Trains Associates and The Hudson-Berkshire Division NMRA will be bringing you the Annual Great Train Extravaganza on December 6th, at the Empire State Convention Center. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts in N, HO, and O-gauge, educational displays, free seminars, and over 200 tables selling all sorts of model trains, train sets, part & accessories, building kits, scenery items, train memorabilia, prints, books, videos, DVDs, and more. Admission: $5.00, adults; 12 and under admitted free when accompanied by an adult. For more information, call (518) 371-9164; or visit: www.gtealbany.org

New York, Westbury, L.I. — The Sunrise Trail Division, NER, NMRA's Winter Meet will be held on January 2nd, at Westbury Memorial Library, 445 Jefferson Street, Exit 32 of Northern State Parkway (Post Road). Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Schedule will include modeling clinics, and nomination of officers and directors. Admission is free. For more information, call: Mike Siegel, (516) 334-3559; or e-mail: viamdlr@hotmal.com

New York, Kingston — The Kingston Model Railroad Club's Annual Open House will be held on December 5-6, at Kingston Model Railroad Club, located on Susan Street. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission: $6.00, adults; $1.00, children under 12. For more information, call the Kingston Model Railroad Club, (845) 334-8233; or e-mail: catman5308@yahoo.com

New York, Westbury, L.I. — The Sunrise Trail Division, NER, NMRA's Winter Meet will be held on January 2nd, at Westbury Memorial Library, 445 Jefferson Street, Exit 32 of Northern State Parkway (Post Road). Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Schedule will include modeling clinics, and nomination of officers and directors. Admission is free. For more information, contact: Mike Siegel, (516) 334-3559; or e-mail: viamdlr@hotmal.com

Ohio, Austintown — The Youngstown Model Railroad Association's 2009 Open House will be held on December 5-6, at 751 N. Four Mile Run Road. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 6:00 p.m. Admission: $3.00, adults; children under 12 admitted free with adult. For more information, e-mail: yomodelrrclub@yahoo.com; or visit: www.ymra.org

Ohio, Dayton — The All Trains Swap Meet will be held on January 17th, at Montgomery Co. Fairgrounds, 1043 S. Main. Hours will be from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include model trains in all scales, railroad antiques, and collectables. Refreshments will be available. Admission: $5.00, adults; under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Larry Zeller, 1215 Camaro Ct., Piqua, OH 45356-9793; (937) 773-7186.

Ohio, Lima — The Putnam Association of Railfans, Inc.'s Model Railroad Show and Swap Meet will be held on December 26th, at Allen County Fairgrounds. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include operating layouts, 100+ tables, and free parking. Admission: $4.00, adults; children under 12 admitted free with an adult. For more information, contact: Warren Pratt, 1704 Hillstone Dr., Findlay, OH 45840; (419) 420-1942.

Ohio, Massillon — CJ Trains' Winter Massillon Train and Toy Show will be held on December 13th, at the Massillon Knights of Columbus Hall, 988 Cherry Road NW. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: $4.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: Jon Ulbright, 941 Buchholz Dr., Wooster, OH 44691; (330) 262-7488 after 6:00 p.m.; e-mail: cathijon@sssnet.com; www.cjtrains.com

Ohio, Niles — The Youngstown Model Railroad Association will be presenting a Toy Train and Model Railroad Flea Market on January 10th, at McMenamy's Banquet Hall, 325 Warren-Youngstown Road. Hours will be from 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Attractions to include all gauges of model railroad equipment, memorabilia, and railroad related items from leading dealers, estate sales, and private collections. Admission: $5.00, adults. For more information call: Jim Pope, (330) 547-3614; or Ed Williams, (330) 539-4786; or visit: www.ymra.org

Ohio, Olmstead Falls — The Cuyahoga Valley & West Shore Model Railroad Club will be hosting their Annual Christmas Open House December 5-6th, at the Olmsted Falls Depot, 25802 Garfield Avenue. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Attractions to include Lionel, HO and N scale operating layouts. Admission: $2.00, adults; children admitted free. For more information, contact: Bill Cramer, (440) 572-3714; e-mail: wmhcramer@yahoo.com

Oklahoma, Oklahoma City — The Oklahoma Railway Museum, COMRail, OK NRail, and the South Canadian Model RR Club will be sponsoring the Oklahoma City Train Show on December 5-6th, at the Oklahoma State Fair Grounds Travel and Transportation Building. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 on Saturday, and from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions to include a Great Train Set giveaway, and the Great Plains Annual N Scale Convention. Admission: $7.00, adults; children 12 and under admitted free. For more information, contact: OKC Train Show, 1313 W. Britton Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73114; (405) 842-4846; e-mail: okctrainshow@aol.com; or visit: www.okctrainshow.com

Oregon, Portland — The Mt. Hood Model Engineers will be having their 31st Annual Open House on December 5th, at 5500 SE Belmont Street. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Attractions to include their HO model train club DC and DCC layout with rebuilt logging area and updated yard areas, located in the basement level at the bottom of the stairs. Nov. 14th will be Diesel Daze; Nov. 21st will be Members Pride Day; Nov 28th will be Passenger Train Day; Nov. 29th will be Steam Ops Day; and Dec. 5th will be Mt. Hood Era Day. Admission is free; donations welcomed. For more information, call: Don Mills, (877) 378-6563; or e-mail: mhmeng@aol.com

Pennsylvania, Chambersburg — The Cumberland Valley Model Railroad Club's Christmas Open Houses will be held on December 13th, 20th, and 27th; and on January 2nd, 9th, and 17th, at 440 Nelson Street. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Attractions to include G-, O-, HO-, and N-gauge operating displays, and raffles. Site is handicap accessible. Admission is free; donations accepted. For more information, call: Bill, (717) 264-3081; or visit: www.cvmrrc.com

Pennsylvania, Coopersburg — The Coopersburg Area Society of Model Engineers will be holding their Annual Open House December 5-6, January 9-10 and January 16-17, at their headquarters in the basement of the Coopersburg Borough Building, 5 North Main Street. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission by donation. Attractions to include the club's large multiple level, walk around, DCC-controlled HO- scale layout. For more information, call: J&D Whistle Stop, (215) 538-0501; or visit: www.casme.org

Pennsylvania, Lewistown — The Mifflin County Model Railroad Club's Open House dates will be December 3-6, 12-13, 26-27, at 3 W. Monument Square. Hours will be from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. December 3-4, in conjunction with the Ice Festival; from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on December 5th, and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. December 6, 12-13, and 26-27th. Attractions to include a large HO layout, and an O and G layout. Admission is free. For more information, call Ed Forsythe at (717) 248 4862; or e-mail: emftrains@aol.com

Pennsylvania, Monaca — The Beaver County Model Railroad and Historical Society's 2009 Christmas Season Open House will be held on December 5-6, 12-13, 19-20, and 26-27 at 416 6th Street, located across from the Monaca Legion in the old Pittsburgh and Lake Erie railroad station, right next to the tracks. Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Admission is free; donations are very much appreciated. For more information, contact: Glenn Wallace, (724) 775-8023; www.bcmrr.railfan.net/openhouse.html

Pennsylvania, Oaks — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held December 12-13, at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center, 100 Station Avenue. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

Pennsylvania, Phoenixville — The Schuylkill Valley Model Railroad Club's Annual Model Railroad Open House will be held December 5-6, and January 9-10, 16-17, 23-24, at 400 S. Main Street (diagonally across from the Phoenixville Library). Hours will be from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Attractions to include the club's layout, which models Reading to Philadelphia with numerous buttons that allow visitors to bring scenes to life, Thomas the Tank, and a scavenger hunt. Admission is free; donations gratefully accepted. For more information, visit or call the club on Tuesday evenings, (610) 935-1126; e-mail: svmodelrailroadclub@yahoo.com; or visit: www.svmrrc.com

Pennsylvania, Richboro — The Abington Lines Model Railroad Club will be having an Open House on December 5-6, 12-13, 26-27, January 2-3, 9-10, 30-31, and February 6-7, at 2066 Second Street Pike (PA Rt. 232). Hours will be from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. Attractions to include multiple trains with digital radio control and sound, two track mainline exceeding 1,000 feet in length, extensive trolley operation, a circus, operating roundhouse, industrial switching areas, waterfront with rail car ferries, wilderness waterfall, and multiple buildings with detailed interiors. Admission is free; donations appreciated. For more information, call the Club at (215) 598-7720; or visit: www.abingtonlines.org

Pennsylvania, York — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held January 9-10, at York Expo Center, 334 Carlisle Avenue. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

Texas, Plano — The 25th Annual Dallas Area Train Show will be held January 16-17th, at the Plano Center, 2000 East Spring Creek Parkway. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. Admission: $7.00, adults; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Bart Bartholomew, 6403 Duffield Dr., Dallas, TX 75248; (972) 733-4998; www.dfwtrainshows.com

Virginia, Chantilly — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held January 2-3, at the Dulles Expo and Convention Center, 4320 Chantilly Shopping Center. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

Virginia, Chantilly — The World's Greatest Hobby On Tour Show will be held January 23-24, at the Dulles Expo Center. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, and from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Sunday. Attractions will include manufacturers, hobby shops, operating displays, interactive activities, and workshops. Admission: $10.00, adults; children under 16 admitted free; admission is good for both days. For more information, contact: World's Greatest Hobby On Tour, P.O. Box 11, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-5094; fax, (630) 214-4113; www.wghshow.com

Virginia, Fairfax — The WB&A Chapter, TCA's Annual Christmas Toy Train Show will be held on December 12th, at the Shriners Kena Temple, 9001 Arlington Blvd. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Attractions to include a train doctor, all scales, parts, new and collectables, and Santa on site. Admission: $5.00, adults; children under 12 and military admitted free. For more information, contact: Pete Jackson, (703) 455-6154; e-mail: Kenameet@wbachapter.org

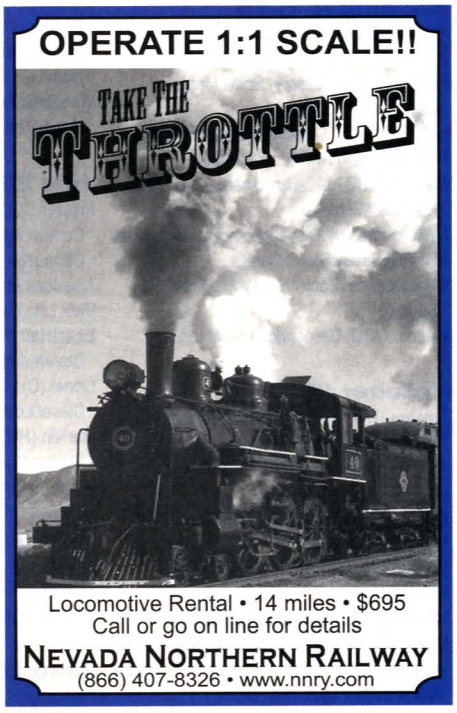
Virginia, Richmond — Greenberg's Train & Toy Show will be held December 19-20, at the Richmond Raceway Complex, 600 East Laburnum Avenue. Show hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. both days. Show will feature a huge marketplace of train, toy, and hobby dealers, operating model railroads, and instructional presentations. Admission: $7.00, adults good for both days; children under 12 admitted free. For more information, contact: Greenberg Shows, P.O. Box 34, Elmhurst, IL 60126; (630) 279-4087; e-mail: Staff@Greenbergshows.com; www.greenbergshows.com

Wisconsin, De Pere — A Train Show will be held December 5th, at Van Veghels Auction, 2050 Profit Place, 2 miles south of De Pere on Highway 57. Hours will be from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Admission: $2.00. For more information, call Mike, (920) 737-5835.

Wisconsin, Madison — The NMRA, Midwest Region, South Central Wisconsin Division's monthly meeting will be held on December 6th, at the Fitchburg Community Center, 5510 Lacy Road. The meeting will begin at 1:00 p.m. Program scheduled to include live clinics, model and photo contests, door prizes, and home layout viewing. Admission is free. For more information, contact SCWD, 3015 Union St. #4, Madison, WI 53714; www.nmra-scwd.org

CANADA

Canada, Ontario, Paris — The Paris Junction 2010 Model Train Show will be held on January 17th, at Paris Fairgrounds, located on Silver Street. Hours will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Admission: $4.00, adults; $3.00, WOD-NMRA Member; children under 10 admitted free. For more information, contact: John Moseley, 20 Graham Cres., London, ON N5W 4L8; (519) 455-1311; e-mail: j.Moseley@simpatico.ca



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Visit us at: www.AmherstRail.org

As a courtesy to our readers, we have compiled an index featuring every product reviewed in the pages of MRN over the past year. We hope you find it useful.

November 2009

Atlas (N) Master Series Offset 2-Bay Hoppers
Bachmann (Fn3) Long Caboose
Fantasonics (Accessory) Scale Magic Background Soundtracks
MRC (DC/DCC) Diesel Sound Decoder for Intermountain FP7/9 Locomotive
MTH (HO) SD70ACe Locomotive & (O) 3-Rail RS-11 & MP15AC
Mokei-Tomix (N) Passenger/Industrial Vehicles
PHM (S) Birney Street Car Kit
Steamscenes (Book) *Rocky Mountain Sunrise*
Walthers (HO) Cornerstone Steel Industry

October 2009

Athearn (HO) UP Gas Turbine Locomotive & (N) 50-foot PS-1 Single Door Boxcars
Atlas (N) Trainman GP15-1 Diesel Locomotive & (HO) Track Cleaning Car
BEST (HO) Wolfeboro Freight House Kit
Broadway Limited (HO) SW7/9 Switcher
Howard's Hobbies (HO) License Plates
Kalmbach (Book) *Done In a Day*
MTH (HO) J-Class Steam Locomotive
Mokei (N) Hyper Construction Vehicles
Walthers (HO) UP/Milwaukee Road Hiawatha Set & (HO) Engineering Office Kit

September 2009

Project DCC, Part 12 A Final Look at Project DCC
American Limited Models (HO) Semaphore Kits
Athearn (N & HO) Flxible Visicoach & (HO) EMD SW1000 Diesel Locomotive
Atlas (N) Masterpiece 1932 ARA Boxcar
Atlas O (O) GP7 Diesel Locomotive
Banta (On30) Cab Conversion Kit
Broadway Limited (HO) Paragon 2 Hudson
Trucks 'N Stuff (HO) Peterbilt 389 and Kenworth W900L

August 2009

Project DCC, Part 11: Automated Computer Control using Panel Pro, Layout Commander, and Train Controller
Aristo-Craft (RCC) Train Engineer Revolution
Athearn (N) Husky Stacks, FP45/F45 with Tsunami Sound, & (HO) CF-7 with Flat Roof
Atlas (HO) Alco HH600/660 Diesel Locomotive
Intermountain (N) EMD FP7 & F7B
Tahoe Model Works (HO) Replacement Railroad Trucks
Piko (HO) Glassworks Complex Structure Kits
Signature Press (Book) *Billboard Refrigerator Cars*
Walthers (HO) Proto 2000 Heritage USRA Mallet
Woodland Scenics (HO) Drive 'N Dine Built 'N Ready Structure

July 2009

Project DCC, Part 10B: Manual Computer Control with Layout Commander & Train Controller
American Limited Models (N) Sand Tower
Blair Line (N) A to Z Used Car Lot Kit
ExactRail (N) Hy-Cube, Vert-a-Pac & Covered Hoppers
Lionel (O) UP Heritage Scheme SD70ACe Diesel Locomotive
Marklin (HO) *Rheingold Express* & Central Station Command Station
Micro-Trains (N) SP C-50-9 Caboose
Walthers (HO) GP15-1 Diesel Locomotive & Diesel Tug and Car Float Kits
Vollmer (HO) Jeep Wrangler Rubicon
Woodland Scenics (G) Whistle While He Works Figure Set

June 2009

Project DCC, Part 10A: Manual Computer Control with Panel Pro & STP
Athearn (N) Overland Passenger Cars & (HO) F45/FP45
Atlas O & NCE (O & DCC) 2-Rail O-Scale Primer
Blair Line (N & HO) Section House Kit
Bridgewerks Mini-Mag 3-S DC Power Controller
Hayes Publishing (Book) *Western Pacific Depots and Stations*
Kato (N) Pennsy NW2 Switchers
Pennsylvania Heritage Models (HO) Track Cover System
Piko (G) Qwik Kit Structure Kits
Rivarossi (HO) 60-Foot Passenger Cars
River Point Station (HO) Ford Expedition

May 2009

Project DCC, Part 9B: Using Your PC to Control Your Layout
Athearn (N) PS-1 Double Door Boxcars & (HO) Spine Car Set
Atlas O (O) Amtrk Dash 8 & Horizon Passenger Cars
Bachmann (Fn3) 2-6-6-2 Steam Locomotive
Banta (O) Inspection Cab kit for Bachmann 4-4-0
Broadway Limited (HO) Paragon2 C60AC Diesel Locomotive
Busch (HO) *Ape* Delivery Truck & *Smart ForTwo* Car
ExactRails (HO) Gondola, Hy-Cube, & Vert-A-Pack, Plus Interview
Kato (N) EMD E8/E9 Diesel Locomotive
Southcoast Scale Models (HO) Samuel J. Rizzler Paper Co. Kit

April 2009

Project DCC, Part 9A: Computer Control Introduction
Athearn (HO) Genesis SD60M Diesel Locomotive
CMW (HO) Utility Truck
Charles Smiley (DVD) *Your Colorful Southern Pacific*
Kato (N) *Broadway Limited* Passenger Car Set & Add On
MTH (O) Premier Line Dash 8 Diesel Locomotive
Micro-Trains (Z) ACF Passenger Car Set
Piko (Large) Garden Train Set
Rivarossi (HO) 4-8-8-4 *Big Boy* Steam Locomotive
Sunset Models (HO) Brass SP Mogul Steam Locomotive
Walthers (N) Cornerstone Sanding Tower Kit & (HO) *Hiawatha* Set Conclusion

March 2009

Project DCC, Part 8 Integrating a Grade Crossing
Aristo-Craft (L) 2-Bay Hopper
Atlas (N) Code 65 True-Track & (HO) Covered Hopper
Bachmann (On30) Railbus and Trailer & (Book) *E-Z Model Railroads*
Banta (HO, S & O) Railroad Signs
Bar Mills (HO & O) Gas Stop
Bluford Shops (N) Auto Boxcars
Broadway Limited (HO) 2-10-2 Steam Locomotive
Drail Modelspoor (Windows PC) *AnyRail Layout Design Software*
Norscot (HO) Caterpillar D9T Bulldozer
S Helper (S) CNJ Cement Car
USA Trains (1:29) *Docksider* 0-6-0T Steam Locomotive

February 2009

Project DCC, Part 7B Signal System Wiring
Aristo-Craft (DVD) *How Model Trains Are Made*
Atlas O (O) MP15 Locomotive
Bachmann (1:20.3) Davenport Critter Mechanical Locomotive
Broadway Limited C30-7
Digitrax (Z, N & HO) DZ125 Decoder
Kato (N) Southern Pacific PA-1 & PB-1 Diesel Locos & GG1 Electric Locomotive
Lenz (DCC) Lenz Set-100 Starter Set Upgrade
Matysik Display Shelf (Multi Scale) Display Shelves
Old and Weary (HO) Tappan Station
Piko (1:22.5) Taurus Locomotive
Seivers Benchwork (ALL) Benchwork Section Kits
Walthers (HO) H-10-44 Diesel Loco & Everett Street Station

January 2009

Project DCC, Part 7A Signal System Wiring
Special Report: Kader Buys Sada Kan
Athearn (N) F45/FP45 Diesel Locomotive & (HO) Checker Cab
Faller (N) Animated Car System
Grand River Models (S) Greg's Grocery Kit
MRC (DCC) 1820 Sound Decoder for Athearn RS3 Locomotive
MTH (HO) NYC 4-8-2 *Mohawk* & (O) CA-1 Caboose
Signature Press (Book) *Southern Pacific Freight Cars, Vol 5*
Walthers (HO) *Hiawatha* Diner and Tap Lounge & RS-2/RSC-2

December 2008

Aristo-Craft (1:29) 40-Foot Boxcars
Athearn (N) Ford C Rescue Trucks, (HO) CSX & Santa Fe Train Sets, (HO) F-7A/B Diesel Locomotive
Atlas (N) Trainman Train Set
Atlas O (O) Industrial Rail Starter Set
Bachmann (Track) E-Z Command DCC Turnouts
Blair Lines (HO) *Pizzaland* Kit
MTH (HO) Railking Scale Diesel Starter Set
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Tokyo Marui (Z) Night Train Set

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